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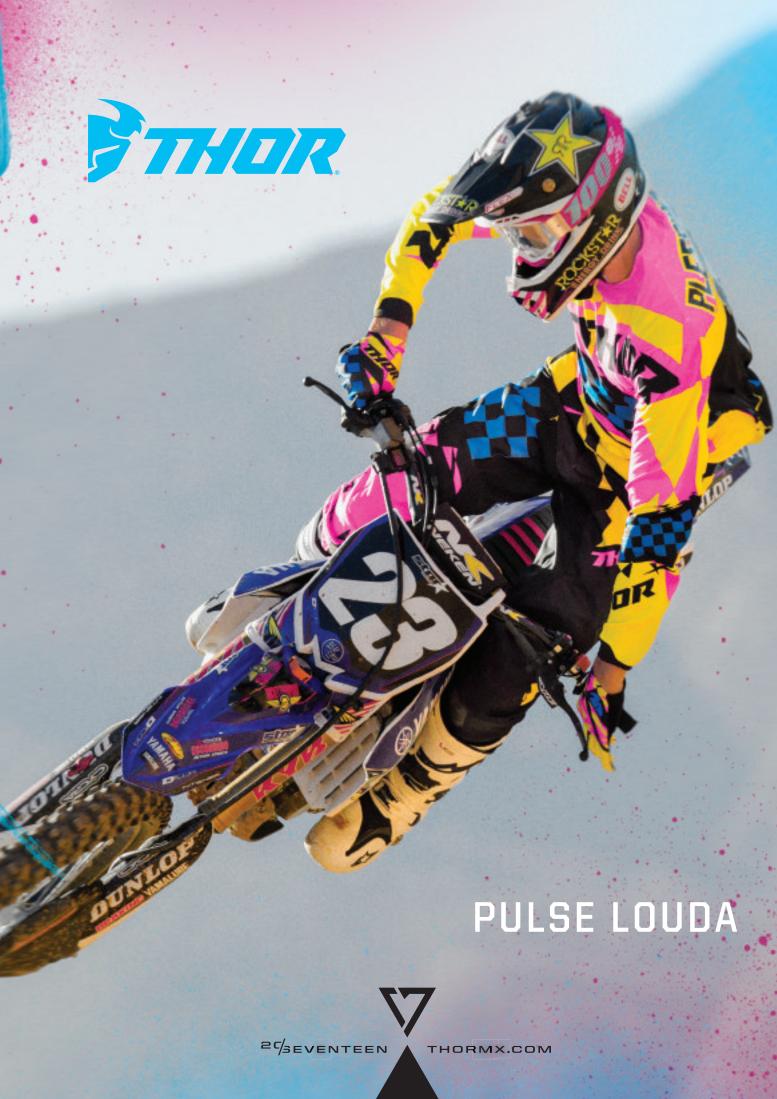




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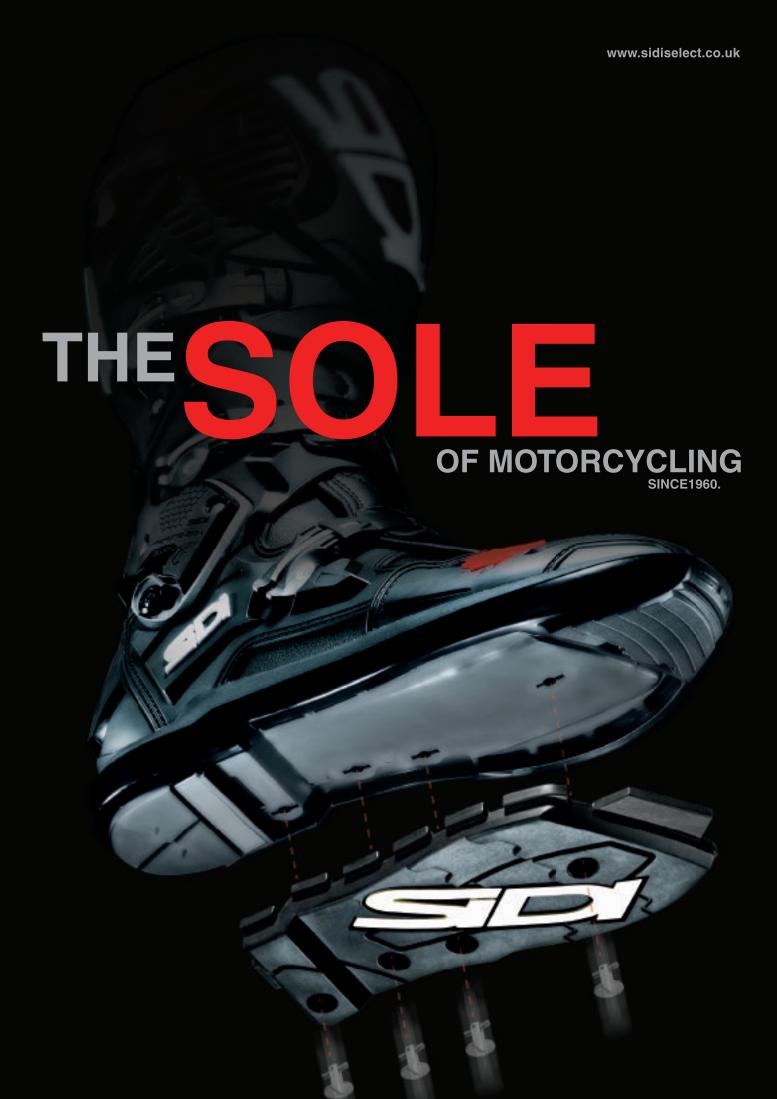
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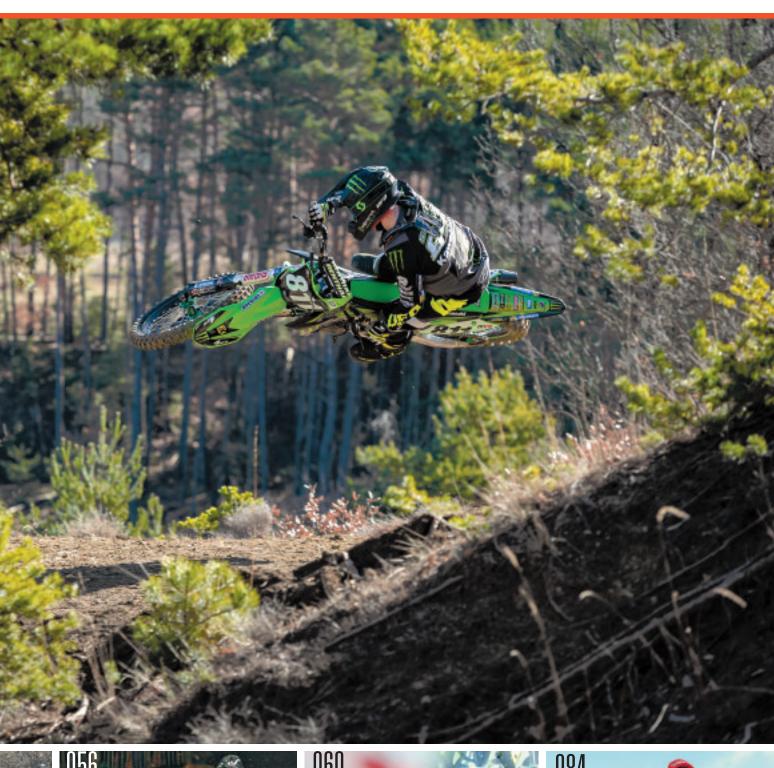
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CLEMENT DESALLE WHIPS OUT A NASTY 'UN
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LAZY SCRUBS AND PACKED-OUT HOT TUBS ARE
TWO OF ADAM STERRY'S FAVOURITE THINGS
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'm writing this on World Book Day which means very little except for the fact that just after dropping the kids off at the pool I dropped the kids off at school with them all dressed as characters from the pages of books. Unfortunately, ASDA – there are other supermarkets available by the way – had sold out of all the more relevant costumes so I got to take a Disney princess, Iron Man and Captain America in through the late door instead of traditional favourites like Fantastic Mr Fox, Pinocchio or the BFG...

But thanks to some unkind twist of fate I had an allergic reaction to the Penicillin I was taking for tonsillitis and I'm currently covered in this raised orange rash which in reality isn't all that bad although being a bit of a drama queen I think I look just like The Thing out of the Fantastic Four. So basically, this morning's school run kinda looked like The Avengers meets Sofia the First...

Anyhoo, ignoring the rained-off opening round of the MX Nationals at FatCat, the British motocross season has got off to a strong start in 2017 with the Arenacross Tour ticking all the boxes – and then some – and the Hawkstone International totally over delivering as well. From here on it's flat out with the Maxxis kicking off on March 12 and then the season running full-bore until October! Blimev.

With so much crammed into the off-road calendar these days it seems like the years just fly by and I got the shock of my life the other day when I stumbled across an old photo of me riding in my last year of the schoolboys and then remembered it was from 1992! That's a quarter of a century ago. It was definitely a stark reminder

that I'm an old giffer – and I don't need any more of those...

Back in '92 I was lucky enough that my family funded a run at the National League – how Marvel sounding is that? – which is what the Youth Nationals were called back then. In terms of success it was a terrible year but for creating memories it was an all-time classic as mum, dad, our dog Sam and I hit the road in our trusty Ford Transit with a caravan in tow.

As well as enjoying proper cut-throat racing in a 40-strong pack of highly-tuned 125cc two-strokes – it was the only choice back then – the National League also offered an opportunity to watch the younger kids in action. And of those younger kids the only one who is still going strong today (that I can remember at least) is Brad Anderson.

Even as a CR80-riding 10-year-old Ando was a pretty intense character and it's fairly awesome to see that 25 years on he's still living the dream and holding it wide open. Based on his performance at the Hawkstone International riding the Verde Sports KTM there's plenty of life left in the old dog yet and he should have another stellar season in the Maxxis, MX Nationals and EMX300 series. Go Ando!





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With a reputation for being 'hard work' some people might feel nervous when tasked with capturing images of Clement Desalle even if it is on Kawasaki Racing Team's official photoshoot! But Nuno Laranjeira ain't scared of anything – except knife-wielding Welsh spiders – and happily headed to Toulouse with his Nikon in-hand. Once there this intrepid Portuguese photo ninja owned the situation and came away with a killer collection of imagery including these absolute classics that it has to be said are super sick!



THE MXGP OF QATAR KICKS OFF THE 2017 FIM MOTOCROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Words by Andy Gee Photos by Ray Archer

his small desert land that protrudes into the Gulf of Persia is perhaps an unlikely place for a motocross grand prix with no great history in our sport but this oil and natural gas rich nation is keen to develop as a go to destination for major sports and will be hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup and is prepared to pay to for the privilege.

This fits perfectly with Youthstream's stated desire for the world championship to be truly global and while it's still wet and cold in Europe, the MX circus travels to four fly-away races in sunnier climes.

The Losail International circuit is a purpose built road racing facility constructed in 2004 in

the barren desert about 20 km from Doha and has hosted MXGP on a man-made track since 2013. Run as an evening race under floodlights it's a clear break from the traditional motocross circuits in Europe but with the flight crates of bikes, spares and tools delivered straight into the garages along pit lane, guaranteed weather, great infrastructure and plenty of hotels nearby, it makes sense.

The MXGP entry list looks stacked with quality. In the red corner, 2016 World Champion Tim Gajser and Russian Evgeny Bobryshev will again race the HRC factory Hondas. After a couple of difficult years on Honda Gautier Paulin joins Max Nagl and Max Anstie (moving up from MX2) at Rockstar Husqvarna, Arnaud Tonus returns

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from two troubled years in America to join Shaun Simpson at Wilvo Yamaha backing up factory Yamaha's 2015 world champion Romain Febvre and Jeremy van Horebeek.

Stefan Everts' Suzuki team finally have new factory bikes for the evergreen Kevin Strijbos and six foot four Lithuanian Arminas Jasikonis and at Monster Kawasaki Jordl Tixier and Clement Desalle return for a second year. Besides Simpson and Anstie, DRT Kawasaki's Tommy Searle and Hitachi KTM's Jake Nichols will be aiming to give British fans plenty to cheer about although a pre-season knee injury kept Searle at home.

Perhaps the biggest buzz is about Jeffrey Herlings' move to the premier class after three championships and five years of domination in the 250s (when he wasn't injured). KTM's heir apparent will however remain under the 250 team awning rather than risk stepping on Antonio Cairoli's toes in the DeCarli run 450 squad. The effect on team dynamics of the 'alpha male team leader is interesting with parallels to the shenanigans between MotoGP teammates Rossi and Lorenzo and the mind games played by Lewis Hamilton in F1. Apparently Herlings didn't feel he would be best served as Cairoli's team-mate and that role is left to Glenn Coldenhoff.

Herlings' speed has never been in question and with both Febvre and Gajser winning after moving up from the 250s, expectations were high. However, a crash in Italy just two weeks before Qatar left Herlings with a broken bone in his right hand and an uphill battle to start his 450 rookie season.

With most of the 450 stars having mixed fortunes in the pre-season races, Antonio Cairoli arrived in Qatar with the most consistent form, winning the Italian Elite championship by taking five wins and a second place, still with plenty to prove after two years spoilt by injuries that

allowed the new kids to win. The eighttime champion looked fit and fast in his preparations for title number nine.

The first casualty came before a tyre had even touched the track though with the unfortunate Lithuanian Jasikonis prevented from leaving the airport as he did not have the correct visa. Detained for 24 hours then deported on Friday morning, this was not the start to the season either he or team boss Everts had wanted.

Giuseppe Luongo's long held vision is to make the MXGP class the elite – similar to MotoGP – and perhaps this is the year his vision is realised as the depth of talent has never been deeper. Of the 21 riders starting in Qatar, five are world champions and 18 have MXGP or MX2 race wins and/ or factory backed bikes.

The 250 class is also wide open with Herlings and Anstie moving up, Dylan Ferrandis racing in America and Alex Tonkov unable to get into Europe following his own visa issue. 2016 runner-up Jeremy Seewer starts as favourite but incredibly only Pauls Jonass and Thomas Covington have ever won a 250 race.

Maxxis British MX2 champion Adam Sterry now on the CLS Kawasaki, fellow Brits Ben Watson (Hitachi KTM) and Conrad Mewse plus his Husqvarna teammate Thomas Olsen, Yamaha's Benoit Paturel, KTM youngster Jorge Prado and HSF Logistics' Davy Pootjes will all be hoping for breakthrough wins.

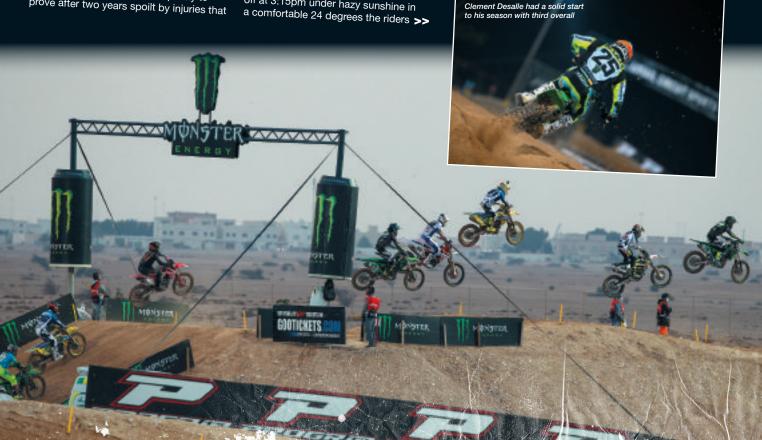
The big change for the new season is the introduction of wire mesh panels on the starting grid. The idea is to provide a constant surface at each event and equal grip across the gate, so no more packing of the dirt by riders before the sighting lap.

This race is held on a Friday and Saturday but before Free Practice kicks off at 3:15pm under hazy sunshine in a comfortable 24 degrees the ridays and the statement of the stat











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assemble for the annual school photo.

The sandy/gritty track is moist after unseasonable rains and perfectly groomed, snaking around in a cloverleaf shape adjacent to the end of pit straight on the main road racing circuit. While it's a man-made track and run under floodlights it's definitely not a supercross track – lap times are in the 1 minute 45 range with a fast and flowing layout and big jumps. Carrying corner speed into the fast straights looks like the only way to make time with a good start being crucial for a top finish.

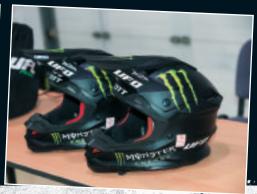
As evening falls so does the temperature. A brief power cut when a lightning generator ran out of fuel was soon fixed and under bright floodlights MX2 qualifying saw the fast starting Samuele Bernardini lead for a few laps until being steadily picked off before a wardrobe malfunction saw his race pants come undone and start sliding down. As other riders pulled tear-offs Bernardini was trying to pull his pants up and inevitably lost even more places. Jonass took an easy win from Paturel and Seewer.

When the MXGP riders raced off the gate for their qualifying race any idea the Gajser wasn't ready were soon dispelled as he holeshot then pulled out a second a lap over Cairoli, Paulin, Bobryshev and Febvre. As the two lap board came out Cairoli started to close on

Gajser but it was too late and Gajser (who had been suffering with flu all week) won by 0.6 seconds. Febvre fell and lost two spots but more significantly Herlings had steadily faded back to 16th apparently hampered by the hand injury. Could his season already be fatally wounded?

As with all MXGPs the track is left ungraded and allowed to rough up as the races proceed. Without any support races the Qatar track looked relatively smooth but increased lap times during the races suggested it was tougher than it looked (especially on TV) and riders confirmed that it was developing some tricky square edged bumps with deceptively >>>









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chopped out kickers on the jumps.

With Herlings' move to a 450 the MX2 class was primed for a new winner. Pauls Jonass clearly wanted to be that man and looking just like Herlings on his Red Bull factory KTM backed up his qualifying race win with two dominant victories fending off strong challenges from Paturel, Leiber and Olsen who finished in that order in both races. Britain's Adam Sterry was frustrated with his 11-13 placings but was highest placed Brit as Conrad Mewse failed to score and Ben Watson went 19-DNF after he landed heavily from a jump injuring the foot that put him out last year. The team later confirmed that nothing was broken.

The MXGP class could be the most open it's ever been but Cairoli hasn't won eight titles by luck. He launched off the new mesh starting gate and quickly pulled out a second or more per lap over Bobryshev, Desalle and Gajser, taking his lead up to 14 seconds, his feet up riding style making it look easy.

At about half distance things started to hot up as Bobryshev started to fade very slightly which allowed Desalle to launch over the huge triple and land inside him for the next left hander with Gajser also passing a lap later. Paulin also passed Herlings for sixth which seemed to open the flood gates. Herlings was by now clearly in pain, shaking his hand out every lap as he passed the mechanics area and eventually fading to 18th as arm pump affected him. Cairoli eased the pace down to take the win by 8.9 seconds from Desalle, Gajser, Bobryshev and Van Horebeek.

As race two leapt off the gate Cairoli was beaten >>















another Tony Cairoli secu another GP win meaning h at least one a year since !! Bellissimo!

across the Fox holeshot line by Gajser with Romain Febvre and Paulin also getting better starts. As Gajser completed the first lap and tipped into the right hand bend at the end of pit straight Cairoli stuffed his front wheel into the HRC Honda's swinging arm standing Gajser up but also causing himself to bobble.

Unfazed, Gajser powered away and when Cairoli made another mistake at mid-distance the gap between them went out to 3.8 seconds. Second place would be enough for Cairoli to win the GP and the race appeared to settle down.

Tonus, Simpson and Nagl had all made mistakes separately, relegating them to the back of the pack but the fast track made it almost impossible to make up lost ground. Herlings held 11th with Kevin Strijbos trying everything to pass the MX2 world champion.

As the clock ticked down Cairoli started to close in on Gajser. With the two lap board out there was less than a second between them; Gajser tried to protect the inside line and Cairoli railed the outside as the duo swept

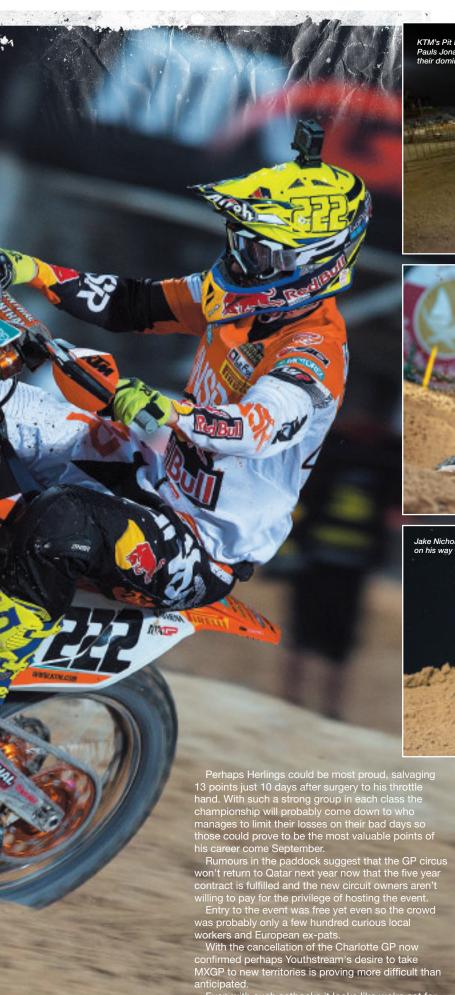
around the far side of the circuit.

Unable to retaliate, Gajser settled for second place Unable to retaliate, Gajser settled for second place as Cairoli took the win, with Febvre and Desalle twenty seconds back and Paulin a distant fifth. Overall, it was Cairoli with Gajser second and Desalle third. Max Anstie ended his 450 debut with 13-10 for 10th place as fellow Brits Simpson (16th) and Jake Nichols (20th) never found their rhythm.

While the non alcoholic champagne corks popped on the podium the race bikes were cleaned and packed away in the flight crates ready to be collected for the trip to Indonesia the next morning, the mechanics working into the small hours.

to Indonesia the next morning, are into the small hours.

It's always difficult to read too much into the opening Grand Prix particularly when the track is unlike many others in the 19-race series. It was a great weekend for KTM with double race wins in each class, the first MX2 GP win for Jonass and the first win in Qatar for Cairoli. Gajser showed grit to overcome the flu for second place and everyone left without sustaining injuries.









anticipated.

Even with such setbacks it looks like we're set for an epic year in each class...





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Words by Sean Lawless and Robert Lynn

fter what seems like months of sweet Fanny Adams, this Newshound's finally getting a proper sniff of motocross as the season kicks into gear at home and abroad with internationals and GPs on the calendar.

First things first though, let's sign off on the 2017 Arenacross Tour which, er, signed off in Wembley's SSE Arena where there was yet another night of climatic, bar-to-bar action.

Just like last year, sulky Cedric Soubeyras went into the series showdown in the lead and – just like last year – his title hopes went tits-up when he failed to finish the Main Event. And – just like last year – it was defending champion Thomas Ramette who floated to the top like the lovely big dollop of fine French cream that he truly is.

Amazingly, SR75 World Team Suzuki's AX assassin hasn't won a Main Event this time around (although his team-mate Cyrille Coulon certainly has) but his refusal to roll over and play dead saw him clinch a hat-trick – yep, that's back-to-back-to-back – of arenacross titles.

If you know the tune then sing along with me...

"Geoff Walker's gone to Wembley, his knees have gone all trembly..."

To be fair to Soubs, he's toned it down a lot this year and les mist rouge that descended

in 2016 didn't materialise which definitely won him a lot of fans and a new-found respect in the Newshound doghouse.

A certain GP correspondent – who I won't embarrass by mentioning by name \*cough\* Alex Hodgkinson \*cough\* – always used to refer to pre-season internationals as 'lemonade' races, the inference being that they mean Jacques Merde to the riders. Personally, I find that a tad disrespectful – real racers want to win whatever the event and the Hawkstone International Motocross certainly wasn't lacking in the barbangin' department.

The big winners in the Shropshire sand were IceOne Husqvarna's pimpin' Panzer powerhouse Max Nagl in MX1 and Red Bull KTM's lit Lithuanian Pauls Jonass in MX2. And well done to my (starts dodgy '70s DJ impression) young friend (stops dodgy '70s DJ impression) Tom Grimshaw for his final race win in the MXY2 class – he's a great lad from a great family and is going to go well this year now he's traded up from a one-twenty-five stroker to a two-fiddy four-banger. Not 'alf mate!

The Hawkstone International is without doubt one of the highlights of the racing calendar and, if it wasn't for that pesky early-season Italian championship, would be pretty much like an unofficial GP. Sadly, we didn't get to see the likes of Tony, Tim and Jeffers this time around

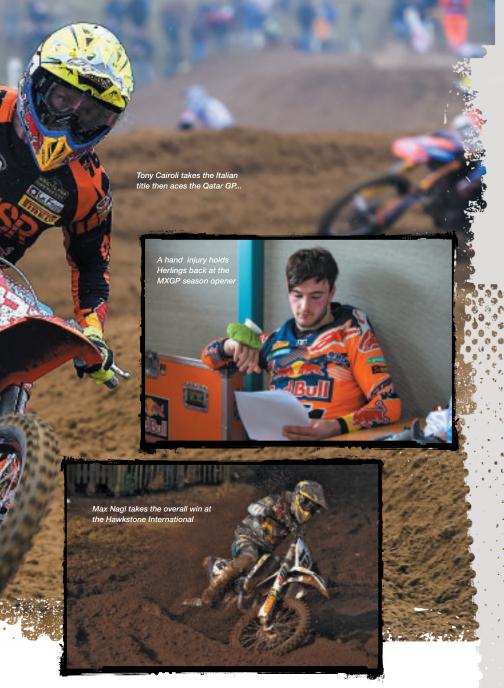
but the racing was great, the weather was good and the crowd was bloody huge. Good work HIMX peeps!

Another awesome reason for supporting the HIMX is, if you can remember so far back, that it replaced the traditional New Year's Day meeting at Hawkstone. I went to too many of those and I was always cold, always hungover and always pissed (that's in the American sense of being upset – rather than the English sense of being intoxicated – which is allowed under Johnston Press guidelines) off to be there. I also strongly suspect I'd have failed a breathalyser until I got to Warrington (on the way home).

Seeing as I've mentioned the Internazionali d'Italia I should point out that Tony The Tiger raced to five wins from six starts to claim his national title and wave two fingers at all the nay-sayers who reckoned that after two years without a world title the eight-time champ was a spent force.

A couple of bum years with injuries have stopped Top Cat from equalling Stefan Everts' tally of 10 titles but judging by the way he rode at the opening GP of the year in Qatar there's life in the old dog yet.

Just like that dodgy couple that live three doors down (don't play innocent – you know what I mean), TC came out swinging in the Middle East and smashed out a couple (just like that dodgy couple that live three doors down)



of wins. He led every lap of the opener and stalked Gajser for most of the second before nipping into the lead two laps from home and clearing off.

The man-made track may not provide the best indication of form but if I was racing him for the MXGP title this year I'd be poopy-pants right now.

Biggest disappointment to come out of Qatar has to be Jeffers Herlings' performance. In his rookie MXGP race the young Dutchman never got going but the fact he raced with a plate in his right hand gets my respect every day of the week. He'll have his moments this season but I doubt he'll beat the man he's been groomed by years by KTM to replace. Well, not yet...

Fortunately for the Mattighofen massive, Jonass recovered from a concussion sustained a couple of weeks before to smash out two wins of his own in MX2. The latest bullet from the Baltic whipped out some smackdown to put the willies up the opposition.

Indonesia's next on the GP schedule – check back next month for another inappropriate update...

Back to Blighty now and, let's be honest, South Yorkshire on even the brightest, warmest summer day is a little like Chenobyl in the dead of winter. FatCat is sand so, strictly speaking, should be all-weather – unfortunately, the Biblical downpours Doncaster has soaked up have left it moister than an oyster or, if you prefer, wetter than an otter's pocket.

It takes a big ole' set of back wheels to pull the plug on a meeting – especially if it's a bad-ass domestic championship round – so well done to the team behind the Michelin MX Nationals for having the cojones to cancel the opening round.

I was looking forward to seeing how everyone's off-season prep had gone but I guess I'm going to have to chill for seven days and then have a good catch-up at the opening round of the Maxxis at Culham on March 12. We won't have the pleasure of seeing Tommy Searle there – his knee injury will put him out until at least round two – but there are still some seriously swift guys lined up in both classes.

Finally this month, let's sign off in the same way we started with an indoor update...

Over the pond the Monster Energy Supercross Championship is just about as good as it gets and it's all going on at the moment. Eli Tomac is my favourite rider of the last few years – there's no-one on the planet who hangs it out like he does



# BILLY BOLT ON TOP! FORMER TRIALS AGE TAKES FIRST EXTREME WIN

Photo by Tilde Tighe

Billy Bolt claimed his first important extreme enduro win with victory in the third round of the British Extreme Enduro Championship.

Beating guys like Graham Jarvis, David Knight and Paul Bolton to the win, Bolt perfectly mastered the atrocious conditions Mid Wales had to offer.

Faced with a 12-mile long course, Bolt held his nerve in the deteriorating conditions to come out on top and secure a memorable win. With two rounds remaining Bolt now heads the championship chase.

Team-mate Graham Jarvis suffered his first defeat of 2017 when he ran out of fuel and was later disqualified for refuelling in the wrong place.



# FIVE ALIVE! JARVIS CLINCHES FIFTH HELLS GATE TITLE.

Husqvarna's Graham Jarvis returned to the top step of the Hell's Gate podium by securing a record smashing fifth victory at the il Ciocco Italian venue.

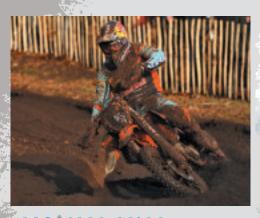
On a roll since the turn of the New Year, Jarvis made Hell's Gate his fifth win from five starts in 2017. Faced with a wealth of talented young guns snapping at the 41 year old's heels, Jarvis calmly went about his business.

Winning the morning race put him on pole position for the afternoon's main event. Riding his own race he avoided trouble when others didn't, going on to take the win. He was joined on the podium by South African's Travis Teasdale and Wade Young — 2016's winner.

# SHE'S OFF! AND IT'S GOODBYE FROM HER....



One of DBR's longest-serving team members leaves the company this month to set up her own hardware business – Nails by Kerry. Despite the name of her new company we do believe she'll be selling screws and other types of fasteners so don't fear if you're not a fan of hammered home fixing devices. Although she may have her knockers Kerry will definitely be missed at DBR Towers but only on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Fnar. Seriously though we wish her all the best! Good luck, mate...



## MOMMA MIA! Nathan watson waxes 'em in Inalian nationals

KTM's Nathan Watson left everyone fighting for second best when he dominated the opening round of the Italian Enduro Championship.

Proving once again to be one of the best sand riders in the business, Watson made short work of the Italian enduro on the Lignano beaches. Mastering the soft sandy conditions, Watson won the the first day of special test racing by a cool two minutes. Day two was a two hour beach race and by pretty much leading it from the off, he stretched his advantage out to a massive five minutes by the race's end.

European champ Brad Freeman was also in the mix as he made his 2017 start with Beta. He ended day one 13th before finishing fifth overall on day two.

# GOING TO AMERICA! JACK EDMONDSON HEADS TO GNCC...

125cc enduro world champ Jack Edmondson will contest USA's GNCC Racing series for 2017 with Coastal Racing Husqvarna. Edmondson will compete in the newly formed XC3 125 two-stroke category along with returning home for the British Enduro Championship. He joins the experienced Coastal Racing Team alongside 2015 ISDE champ Ryan Sipes and under the watchful eye of former GNCC champ Barry Hawk.

– but he's fighting for the title with the most consistent rider of his generation.

With K-Roo's current career being conducted on Instagram, Ryan Dungey is cruising clear. He's consistently being torn a new one because he's so, sorry, consistent but how can you not be a fan of 'The Diesel'?

Nearing the halfway point of the series, Red Bull KTM's US posterboy is a DNF ahead but I'm holding out for ET – and Marvellous Marv for that matter – to take it down to the wire.

It's almost go time for the 2017 EnduroGP World Championship. As D-Day's March 25th comes hurtling towards us at warp speed, teams everywhere are busy chilling their gonads as they prepare for the series opener that will be staged in the Scandinavian snow and ice of Finland.

Ready for a baltic start to the season, riders and teams are venturing into the unknown of sorts as they face a new-look championship. Two classes for 2017 — Enduro2 and EnduroGP — Finland will be an enduro with a twist. Instead of the normal multi-lap format with three special tests per lap, the race — based around a lake — will set riders out on a proposed 150-kilometre loop taking in a colossal 15 special tests, which will be unseen prior to race day. All-in-all, they're estimating approximately 12 hours in the saddle each day. In nice warm sunny weather that's one thing,

but in about two foot of snow, that's gonna be a completely different animal.

We've also got a new championship structure to get our heads around too. Enduro 1, Enduro 2 and Enduro 3 as we know it are gone. For 2017 the set up is a bit more like MXGP with two classes. Enduro2 will be for machines up to 250cc in either two-stroke or four-stroke. EnduroGP, billed as the premier class, will be 251cc above for two-stroke and four-stroke machines. There's no overall, outright class anymore.

Sherco's Matt Phillips, the 2016 EnduroGP champion, will be the guy starting out 2017 with the target on his back. Naturally the Australian has never ridden in snow before so he's probably got a bit of figuring out to do before Finland but Phillips' is a grafter and knows how to play the long game too. If he doesn't win at round one he won't get too beat up about it, but if he does, then it could be a long year for everyone else.

British interest and there's a lot to be interested. Steve Holcombe, Jamie McCanney, Danny McCanney, Nathan Watson and Brad Freeman will have our hopes held high.

Steve Holcombe (Beta) and Nathan Watson (KTM) are our top hopes for glory in EnduroGP. Holcombe, as the 2016 Enduro 3 champion, is in the form of his life. He was the breakthrough rider of 2016 having jumped up from the junior

to seniors ranks and being instantly on it. If not for a couple of non-scores he could have also been EnduroGP champion too.

Nathan Watson was the top rookie of 2016 in world enduro. A bloody fast learner he grabbed his first win in Enduro 1 by midseason and then kept Eero Remes honest for the title. Moving up to KTM 350f machinery, he'll be feeling more comfortable on the bigger bike. Already out to a winning start in the Italian nationals, Watson is gunning for glory and will be a championship contender.

In the Enduro2 class the McCanney brothers go head-to-head. Danny with Husqvarna and Jamie with Yamaha, both on factory machinery, have the tools to do the business. Danny worked his way back from a preseason injury in 2016 to place third overall, while Jamie pretty much put it on the podium whenever he wasn't injured. Both are fighting fit and ready to do the business.

In the Juniors we see European champion Brad Freeman step into EnduroGP's Junior category for the first time proper. He's teamed up with Boano Beta, who helped Danny McCanney claim the 2014 Junior title and put Steve Holcombe on the map in 2015, so he's in good hands.

So in theory we could see a British rider winning Enduro2, EnduroGP and Enduro Junior titles in 2017. Now how about that?







# VIKTOR ARBEKOV 1942-2017

An appreciation by Jack Burnicle

1965 250cc World Champion Viktor Arbekov passed away in February, just three weeks short of his 75th birthday. A motorcycle mechanic from Podolsk, outside Moscow, Arbekov started riding at the age of 10 and began competing four years later with the local Podolsk Automotoclub on a home-brewed 125.

He won the first of his 14 Russian championships on a 125 in 1959 and rode his home grand prix for the first time when the 250s came to Moscow in 1963. Mounted on a Russian built 'Krovert' he finished a sensational fourth behind seasoned GP stars Vlastimil Valek, Igor Grigoriev and Karel Pilar. Valek and Grigoriev ended the year second and third in the world!

Arbekov also finished runner-up to Grigoriev in the Russian 250 series and earned a CZ ride for 1964, the year that established him on the world stage. Second in the Russian and Czech GPs and third at Ruskeasanta, in Finland behind world champion elect Joel Robert. Viktor won the final round at Apolda - Ken Roczen's home town! - in Eastern Germany and finished third in the world championship behind Robert and Swedish legend Torsten Hallman. He also stole both 175 and 250cc Russian national titles from Grigoriev.

Remember these were the days of the Soviet Union (USSR), the Iron Curtain and the Cold War when Russian riders were constantly accompanied to GPs by the KGB - the USSR's secret security agency - and were kept apart from Western competitors. Yet the amiable Arbekov still earned the nickname 'Smiler' among his great rivals Robert, Hallman and dashing Brit Dave Bickers.

In 1965 he swept aside those great champions. Victories at St Quentin in France, Giessen's polished blue groove in West Germany and the Italian, Dutch and Polish GPs proved Viktor's versatility as he beat Robert and Bickers, winners of three rounds apiece, to seize Russia's first world crown.

In 1966 Arbekov went on to win the West German 500GP as a wild card and claim 250GP triumphs at his home round in Leningrad, in front of 100,000 fans,



and at Santa Rosa in Spain but lost out in the title chase to Hallman and Robert. Viktor also won the 1967 250GP opener at Barcelona, a poisoned chalice because tradition dictates that the winner in Spain doesn't become world champ! Sure enough, Hallman and Robert once more dominated...

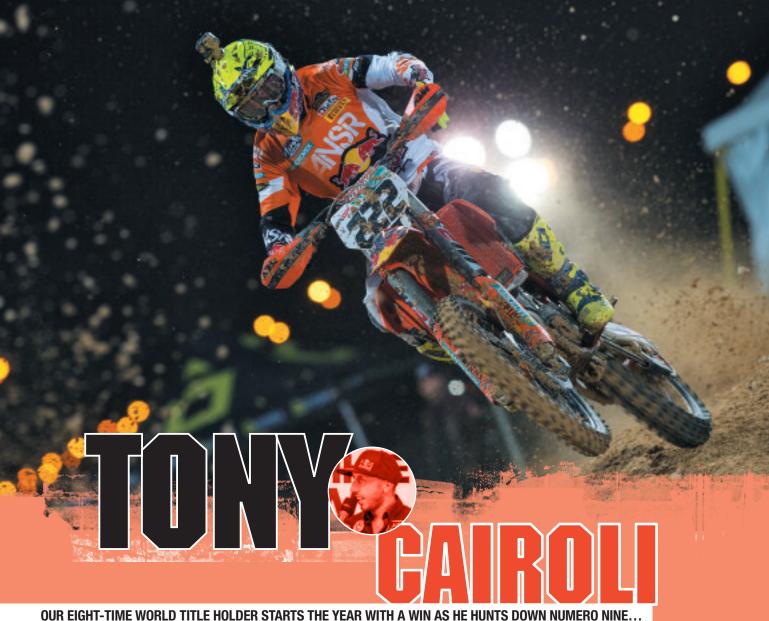
Viktor Arbekov competed in British 250GPs at Cadwell Park, Hawkstone and Wakes Colne in his brief but mercurial career, winning 10 grands prix between the end of 1964 and the beginning of 1967. And when he reappeared aged 47 at Namur's legendary Vets' reunion in 1989, as well as wearing his original race shirt Viktor still wore that engaging smile!

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alo teman-teman! This is how they say 'hi my friends' here in Indonesia. We arrived two days ago in Pangkal Pinang, a little island that's a one-hour flight from Jakarta for the second round of the 2017 MXGP season. The time really is flying as well - last time we chatted I was coming back from Sardinia to race at my home track in Malagrotta and now we are already in Indonesia! It's unreal, life's going so fast!

In Rome it was a second great weekend of races for me. I won in front of a massive crowd and it was so emotional to see so many smiling faces down at the podium, almost crying due to the victory. Michele, Nazareno, Tania, Giuseppe, Davide - all my crew and, of course, the boss Claudio who was close to me on the podium.

Following that weekend we went to Ottobiano, back in the sand, where I was second in MX1 and first in the Elite class, grabbing both the titles of this cool pre-season series. Taking stock the final balance is more than positive. I won five of the six motos with one second, I started in front four times and in second place twice and I was the fastest on track during all the six races! Excellent!

After the Internazionali d'Italia ended I was back in Sardinia for a few days of riding and to complete my physical preparation before leaving for Qatar. Unfortunately, the day before travelling to Doha I was feeling ill with a flu that made me stomach sick so I ended up having to take some medicine to feel better. I was worried that this could affect my performances on track - this is my 14th season in the world championship and I'm not a kid anymore so I have to take care of my health!

Once on track I started to feel that I could do what I needed to do, riding on this beautiful circuit in the way I wanted. The track was nice, very well prepared and the ground better than on other occasions with no stones and good grip. Maybe also because in the previous days they told me it had rained loads. The 420 powerful lamps were switched on and the lights illuminated the show of MX2 and MXGP, racing here for the first GP of the year!

I had found some good lines during Friday's free practice and I felt good on the bike during the whole weekend. When the gate dropped Saturday I took the first holeshot of the season from the metal grids that are now used for the start and I managed to find a good speed and to keep the lead for the entire moto. In race two I also got a good jump out of the gate but then I touched a rut and missed the first position at the first corner. Tim [Gajser] was pretty fast so I decided to follow him until five laps before the end when he started to pull a comfortable gap and I was four seconds behind him.

I cranked it up and with two laps to go I managed to pass him, grabbing my second win of the day. It was a very good weekend and a good result for me and the whole team - all the hard work we did together during the winter time and

the sacrifices we all had to make to arrive here in good condition with body and bike paid off.

It was fantastic to hold the red plate in my hands again after two years. The last time that I had it on my bike was in 2015 following on from my title victory in 2014 and I haven't had it since so it's a nice comeback from Qatar 2015 to Qatar 2017. I've also reached another target, I've managed to win at least one GP in each of the 14 years of my racing in the world championship. It's never happened before and I hope to make the record longer and longer and longer.

Now it's time to go for a quick lunch and then I'll go back in the gym for another little training session with our trainer Giuseppe. Here in Indonesia it's been raining a lot for the last few weeks and yesterday we had so much rain that we were a bit scared for the race. Whatever happens it will be the same for everybody and soon round number two will be completed.

I also want to say hi to my pal Tommy Searle who has not yet completely recovered from the bad knee injury he suffered a few months ago in the USA. We miss you mate, keep training hard and see you soon on track again!

A presto amici inglesi!





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#### TEAM GREEN'S AX BOSS TALKS ABOUT THE MANY HATS NEEDED TO GET THE JOB DONE RIGHT...

asting back to my own personal
Arenacross experience in 2014
when I vacated the series early
with virtually one leg halfway in a
body bag, it surprises me when
I say I'm genuinely sad that this
years Arenacross tour is over. I had
an absolutely bitchin' time working for Team Green
Kawasaki getting on well with all of the guys on the
team – and the tour for that matter. I even got to
experience our sport from a brand new viewpoint.
It was made a hell of a lot easier to enjoy however
with the fact that the lads on the team were twistin'
harder than Chubby Checker which added the
spice of excitement to the job.

It's funny, though, because I've been going to motocross all my days but still learned something new (I'm sure there's a saying which is very apt for this moment). However it didn't take much figuring out mind but I learned a lot about people management and how it's a valuable, underrated skill that's compulsory if you want to be a good leader.

In our sport you have various individuals all with their own characters, agendas and experiences who need to be perfectly happy and in the right frame of mind to operate/perform at their full potential – which we need to win. For example – this guy is ill this week so starts the day with a little self-doubt so needs to be inspired and reassured all day while four other guys do not.

This guy likes that tyre even though the rest of the boys are on this one because of something that happened one time but can't help noticing he's the only one which leaves him questioning himself and me assuring him that he is right and the rest are wrong.

That guy likes these grips because they're better for him while this dude would be happy to finish there where as the other guy would not! Or, simply, little Jimmy is from this hood so talks a little like this about all that, yet big Timmy does not and doesn't even speak English as a first language...

Like I said, everyone needed me to be a different Bry to them within an 18 square metre floor space which prior to starting was a fact that I completely overlooked. So, what hats did I have to wear for our guys...

Rider A is an old hand and didn't need babied in any way. He was smooth on the bike, barely revved it but covered the ground really quick. He took care of his own motivation and expected results out of himself and if he didn't meet his own expectations he was pissed!

That meant he didn't need any motivating, sometimes I actually had to talk him down because he was so amped up after a bad result but normally I would just debrief with him quickly after each session, pass on any advice I think might be valuable, discuss whatever he thought maybe he could change or do, get him the timing sheets and then let him do his thing. Other than that I very rarely had to do much more than routine stuff.

Rider B was a super nice dude and a hardy bastard on two wheels. I spent more time with him than probably anyone because he's an out-of-towner and in a land on his own and equally as new to Arenacross as he was to me. He was just learning the ropes in his first indoor season and it was a steep learning curve being introduced to the bare-knuckle racing – race strategies, contact, intensity...

Sometimes his mentality lacked strength, though, and he would need reminded of the skills we could see from the sidelines and picked up when his head was down. He's got a nut-sack full of aggression and talent but his flaw is that he is a shirt reader – he looks at the start list before each race and decides who can beat him and who can't, subconsciously. I often had to talk that out of him.

Otherwise, he just needed to be calmed and assured and no pressure added on by the team. By the end of the season he adopted an NFG attitude and just took each race as it came after appreciating that it's completely unpredictable out there on the dance floor. I definitely encouraged that attitude from

him because it removed an element of stress on him which helped him riding, but I can't say I would have been the same with the other guys...

Then we have the C rider. He's got a sh\*t-ton of raw talent and we implemented a work ethic to support it. I had to talk a little bit of bravery into him after it became apparent in the early rounds that he was "too nice". He needed to be confident with his passes and make them count so I worked on that with him a lot, too

He improved massively from the first gate drop to the last as he grew in confidence. He was hard on himself when he underachieved which always motivated him to do better next time, and who was I to get in the way of that. I would pick a few good aspects of the bad results and after the race while he sits there with his face dripping I would exploit the good parts to reassure him that I wasn't mad because he wouldn't need the added pressure from me on top of what he applied himself as he would just go off like a hand grenade next time out.

However, a couple of times in practice when he wasn't upset with his riding and quite blatantly it was terrible, that's when I added the heat! But in general he was a character. When he wasn't mad at himself he was good fun which is his way of relaxing so I'd have to be a stand up comedian at times, too.

And then the youngsters. Honestly, as cliché as it sounds as long as they were having a good time then it's all okay. But, they were equally as hard on themselves as the older team riders. Our young guys were very technically good riders and really precise with their riding but the guys who were often beating them perhaps rolled the dice a little more and took more chances which is what I felt gave them that little edge often. But how do you give advice to a couple of young kids to hang it out a little more and take chances? Well you don't...You tell the parents. Muahahahahahahaha. Up there for thinking, down there for dancing...





WITH THE DAYS COUNTING DOWN TO THE OPENING ROUND OF THE 2017 ENDURO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SPEEDY STEVE'S BEEN CHILLING OUT IN SNOWY FINLAND...

un. Frustrating. Unpredictable.
Exciting. I could go one but that's pretty much the top and bottom of it when it comes to describing what it's like riding in snow. I guess like most people I've messed around in the white stuff close to home once or twice over the years but heading to Finland for some serious snow riding has been a real eye-opener.

Winters in Finland, despite the folks there saying that they're 'not like they used to be' are pretty serious compared to what we experience in the UK. It gets cold, seriously cold. And dark. Cold and dark, pretty much sums it up. But that certainly doesn't stop the riding.

I'm writing this from Jamsa which is a small town north of Helsinki where I spent a few very enjoyable and productive weeks mid-way through last year. Things are a lot different looking this time around with a thick blanket of snow covering the tracks and trails I rode on in early summer 2016.

Coming to Finland was always a part of the pre-season plan. I left Spain after competing (I use the phrase lightly) in the Bassela Extreme race. Long story short I got talked into it as I was told it

would be an 'enjoyable' extreme race. Turns out that Alfredo Gomez was involved in setting out the course and it was a beast. I struggled my way to the finish, thankfully in one piece, but trashed my bike. I'll think twice about entering an extreme race the next time someone tells me 'it'll be fun'.

From Spain I returned to Italy. I got a day of riding in at the team's HQ in Italy, then took a trip to visit two of my sponsors – Airoh and Forma. It was cool meeting with those guys, seeing what goes into making the products I ware and talking through some ideas for new designs and colours.

Between factory visits and being here in Finland I took a flight home. Since arriving in Spain it's pretty much been all go, so it was cool to get a few days to chill out and catch up with family and friends. It's always nice to sleep in my own bed as well. Doesn't sound like much, but it's a bit of a treat, especially after five weeks on the road.

I figured that five or six days in Finland would be enough to master the art of snow riding, and understanding what life's like on two wheels and spiked tyres. Turns out it's not as straightforward as I expected. It's fun – being outside in real snow means I was like a kid in a sweet shop for the first few days – but mastering the art of snow riding

isn't an overnight procedure.

I figured that while I'm here I might as well throw myself in at the deep end and race the opening event of the Finnish Enduro Championship. The idea was good but having not done as much riding as I'd hoped prior to the race and then being the first rider to start meant it was a tough old event for me. Being the first rider means there's no line to follow, which is tough in the snow. I spent the first lap being a snow plough for the rest of the entry but I improved and learned a load during the day, so it wasn't all bad.

I should have been back home in the UK, or back in Italy, but I've decided to stay a little longer in Finland. The second round of the Finnish champs should give me a good opportunity to work on my snow skills, and with a few changes to my bike set-up and riding I'm hoping things will take a step forward. The most important thing is that I learn a little more before the first world championship race which is coming up fast!

Steve.

#70





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#### A TRIP TO HAWKSTONE SENDS DAN ON A DRIVE DOWN MEMORY LANE...

ike most of you I attended the Hawkstone International last month and it was a bit of a beauty wasn't it? The journey up was in some pretty thick fog but by the time me and my buddy Mitch Brooks were through the gates the sun had burned through and some cool guys there even went as far as to have sunglasses resting on the peaks of their caps. Which I think I'm okay with in July – but February?

Anyway, while driving in it reminded me – as it always does – that I've actually taken part in this event! Yep, back in 2014 and before my residency here I signed up for the support class and went out and dominated the top 30 with a 28-22 scorecard across the two motos. Since then the event has featured an MXY2 support class which I've just about aged out from – ha – but the next time they have a support class I'll be the first to sign up and after reading about my experience (that's assuming you keep reading) I'm hoping that you'll consider it as well.

In late 2013 entries went live and as I figured I'd probably be there on spectating duty anyway I thought I may as well race – for what it cost it was about the same as the admission fee for two adults and with the entry you get two passes so at this stage I wasn't really out of pocket. Obviously, this wasn't the sole reason – I was looking forward to riding in front of a big crowd, racing a track with tons of history and watching some world champs do battle in between my races.

My riding preparation for this event was one trip to Mepal the weekend before! Sand tracks in the South West are non existent and regular trips up to FatCat quickly drop digits off of your bank account. To be fair the trip to Mepal probably wasn't worth it but that January was pretty dry and I hadn't actually ridden since November so I had to get out somewhere.

Hawkstone isn't a million miles away from me but I'm not the best at early starts so I thought I'd go for the full factory

experience and book a nearby hotel. So the day before I loaded up my trusty 2007 YZ250, a couple of sets of old gear (I wasn't fortunate enough to be hooked up with new kit back then), my toolbox and all the other gubbins that we take all along with us.

Signing on and scrutineering were open on the Saturday afternoon so we got there in time for that to save a job the following morning and score an extra 30 minutes in bed the next day. Can you believe that they sound tested a two-stroke? I couldn't either but I was happy to comply.

As you should with any two-stroke, I went richer on the jetting to cope with the hard going that I'd be facing and warmed my bike up before matey with the sound gun gave it the berries to see how loud it was. Because of the bike running a little rich and the fact I didn't rev it hard to clean it out prior to the sound test, the bike puffed out a huge cloud of smoke and revved up so slowly that I must have had the quietest bike at the meeting and possibly the lowest recording ever taken at a race meeting worldwide.

I was laughing inside as matey wrote 60db on the silencer and gave me the all-important sticker to confirm that my old noisy bike had passed and I was good to go for race day.

After that it was track walk time with some of the GP riders – they didn't know they were on it with me but I can assure you that we all walked together so that counts, doesn't it?

Following a debrief with the team that I didn't have it was back to the hotel for a shower before hitting up the pub next door for a pre-race meal and a pint. There were a few other racers and industry folk there but I didn't talk to them as I was already in 'the zone'.

We left the hotel pretty early to get set up in the pits. I ignored the guy directing us into the overflow riders' area and hooked a left to the hill end of the pro pits, swung right through the gate and parked up. I quickly got out and disappeared for 10 minutes as I've no doubt there was

some walkie-talkie action between the officials and I didn't want to get turfed out of the pro pits!

After dodging that bullet it was announced that the pro pits would close when Tommy Searle arrived – which he did shortly after in a proper filthy Porsche. And by proper filthy I mean it was plastered in road grime from the salty roads that we enjoy in this country in February.

The cool thing about parking where we did was that we weren't too far from the track and were right on the edge of all the big teams. We were pretty much halfway between the Red Bull KTM Sprinter van and their petrol pressure washer next to the toilet block so during MX1 qualifying Jeff Herlings walks past to get his boots cleaned and this was when I collared him for a quick chat.

Practice/qualifying went pretty well – I made it round and didn't fall off thanks to it being relatively dry – and it was so cool to enter the middle part of the track, shortly after the start, where most of the crowd stand. I was riding the Hawkstone International with thousands of people in attendance which is an experience that I'll probably never be able to top. I'd funded the whole thing myself on an old bike while wearing old gear but it was all worth it.

The races went pretty well all things considered and I fared better in the second race despite going off track twice – the first time was down to a fallen rider and the second was completely my own doing but somehow I posted a much better result and I felt much more comfortable out there (maybe because the first off-track excursion meant I was dead last so there was no pressure).

If the 2018 edition features a support class for any old weekend warrior I'll be on the gate for sure and I'd recommend it to anyone. It was awesome!

Dunier Grove



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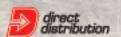




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JAKE USES SHAUN SIMPSON FOR GRIP AND ESCAPES THE CLUTCHES OF SOME HORNY LOCALS IN PANGKAL PINANG...

o the season is underway at last. It was really nice to start the year at Hawkstone Park which is only a few hours from home and on a track that I know pretty well. I hadn't ridden any proper sand prior to it but I wasn't too fussed as the track there isn't too deep.

The day went pretty well – I got decent starts although the first one I had a scare as Simpson drilled himself in the first turn right in front of me and I rode straight over him but somehow stayed on. I rode quite tight after that but in the second race I loosened up a bit but pulled out just past halfway as the bike started to overheat badly after the radiators got clogged up. I was giving the clutch some stick, started to lose a bit of power and didn't want to wreck the motor completely.

In the Super Final I got an okay start but was a pussy around the first couple of turns and lost a few spots. I rode strong and steady to finish the day off on my spare bike which I actually preferred as it had a different motor to the other bike so we learnt some stuff throughout the day too. Since then I've been riding a lot at home or fairly local as the tracks have been pretty good and weather hasn't been too bad.

I'm sat here now in a place called Pangkal Pinang on one of Indonesia's islands. I've never been to this part of the world before – Thailand is a fair bit north of here and it's a lot different. Personally I hated Thailand both times I went but I'm sure there are nice parts but it seems a lot cleaner here and a lot less touristy. The real bonus though is that the people are pumped to have us here.

I honestly believe that 99 per cent of the

people in this city have never seen white westerners in the flesh before. Since we've landed wherever we go we get stopped for photos and the expression on their faces when they first see us is so bizarre – it's sort of a cross between being scared, laughing and shock all in one

It probably doesn't help that I'm in the running for the Europe's largest nose competition and also the world's most deep set eyes final as well which is polar opposite to the local's set up. We're all pretty see through at the moment due to the lovely winter we've been blessed with.

There isn't a great deal to do about here though I must admit. We got a taxi to the local shopping mall which was more like something you'd find on Felixstowe pier but I did buy some pants for riding in as I've scorched most of mine up recently and I bought some wellies for a pound which made my day. Yes, wellies! It's rainy season here and there's about one day a week that it doesn't rain all afternoon and the track's proper wet so I thought rather than wreck my Etnies or running trainers I'd get them.

I had a massage yesterday too and the woman shook my hand after it then grabbed my snout and said "ahhh, so nice – me have operation for nose like this!" I thought, 'I could trade va some off mine if you want?'.

We want to hire some scooters tomorrow and bowl down to the beach on them and get some practice in for the week. Our bikes don't turn up in the crates until late tomorrow so we obviously can't practice this week but that's not such a bad thing as we're all pretty jet lagged and like I said its pi's wet through here.

We got a taxi to the local gym today. That was a laugh on its own. I tried every running machine before realising they were all the same – when

you got a bit of a move on and treated it quite heavily the belt would slightly pause and cause you to feel like you were gonna go flying off the thing.

I had to do seven one-minute sprints full bore with a warm-up and cool down so in order to achieve this without needing a catch mat behind me I had to put it on a four per cent incline which made it pretty fishy. It was fairly toasty in there although not crazy hot – just humid.

My team-mate Ben was attracting all the local birds with his cross trainer skills and the next minute he was in full photo shoot with three middle-aged women. None were too smokey to be fair. Then it was my turn once I'd finished and one asked how we were getting back to the hotel. She offered us a lift in her motor which we accepted and then one said do you want to go home with my friend?

Then they wanted to take us for lunch. I looked at Ben fairly worriedly in the back of her car and he whispered "no!" so I said sorry we don't have enough money and need a shower off which they replied saying they would pay for us.... We got back unscathed and also without lunch but laughing a lot and slightly weirded out by the situation.

People are well happy here though and they are all pumped for the racing so I reckon there will be a big crowd. Hopefully it will be a good event and we come home in good shape for Culham the following weekend for the first British round.

See ya there and cheers for reading...

#GoHard #45



# THE £100,000 **QUES**

WHICH OF THE 2017 MXERS ARE WORTHY OF HAVING YOUR CASH SPLASHED ON THEM? OUR TEST SQUAD ANSWERS THAT QUESTION AND A COUPLE OR SO MORE IN OUR 2017 O'NEAL MEGATEST-TEST...

Words by Max Hind Photos by Harry Lessman



















ur 2017 O'Neal Megatest is finally done and dusted. All of the new machines have been ridden and ragged, our test team have considered the positives and negatives of each motorcycle, our photographer has captured his snaps, our film crew have worked their magic and the scores have been counted up. In your hands you now hold the results of our 2017 250 and 450 class shootouts.

Once again we've gathered a top team of test riders of varying abilities. We've done this in order to ensure that whatever your ability

you have an opinion that you can identify with and relate to no matter what your dirt biking ability may be. We mustered the six major brands - KTM, Husqvarna, Yamaha, Kawasaki, Honda and Suzuki - and asked them to bring along their complete range of four-stroke motocross bikes to Buttercup Farm MX on a chillingly cold morning.

We tested 14 bikes in total. That's 250s and 450s from each and every manufacturer - as well as the two Austrian 350s - worth a grand total of £97,436 at recommended retail prices.

The Buttercup Farm team did us proud on

the day and provided a top notch test ground at a time when most tracks around the UK were under water. Gaining notoriety as being one of the roughest and gnarliest tracks around the innocently named Buttercup circuit proved to be the perfect test facility for the only UK shootout you'll see this year.

It's all well and good testing bikes in idyllic weather with perfect conditions but after all this is a UK test and you guys will be riding your bikes in conditions much like this throughout the year. So, without further ado let's get the ball rolling and find out what our team has to say...



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Slightly tanned two-time British MX2 champion, GP winner, RC car racer and goatee aficionado



DUNN

Oh-so dapper gilet wearing Pro racer, MVR-D's hired AX gun, sick scrubber and part-time male model



GROV

Woolly-hat wearing social media wizard, DBR columnist, bike washer and fab goggle prepper



DAVE HOWARD

Mr Buttercup (I hope that means he's the track owner and it's not just Max's pet name for him - Sutty)



**MAX HIND** 

Floppy haired video dude, test rider, DeLorean fan, Pokemon collector and serial biscuit dunker



# **HOW THE O'NEAL MEGATEST WORKS**

THE INS AND OUTS OF IT ALL..

Each rider gets a 15-minute slot on each bike around the Buttercup Farm circuit and with 14 bikes to test on the day that equates to three and a half hours of riding! Each rider then scores each bike out of 10 in the following categories engine, suspension, brakes, handling and fun factor. Those scores are added up with the total score out of 50 being used to compare them all and rank them both in group and overall.

Of the maximum 700 points available to dish out by each rider Carl Nunn was the most generous using 581 while James Dunn was a bit of a miser by comparison – he only needed 496 to score all 14 bikes! The other three testers fell somewhere in the middle - Max (546), Dan (554) and Dave (566).













Need to know which 250F floats our testers' boats and which one sunk into the Buttercup ruts? Read on and find out...

#### DAN GROVE

The Kawasaki 250 handled really well and was similar to the Honda in feel. I didn't find it outstanding in any particular area but it was a very solid package.

The Yamaha was a good bike and has a really interesting characteristic in the way the power is put down because of the reverse engine - it's quite snappy at the bottom-end. It's not difficult to ride but it's certainly not the easiest and you do notice the wider rad shrouds but then again you do get used to them after a while.

I am little bit biased with the Suzuki as I had one all last year so I knew what to expect. The main changes for this year are black rims and a colour change to the plastics. The whole package is really good and the power is manageable much like the Honda. The downside on the Suzuki is the front brake - they only use a small front brake disc compared to some of the other manufacturers and it is really noticeable.

The Husky 250 has been refined a bit this year. Last year I struggled with the suspension and didn't have a lot of confidence on the bike but this year it's a lot better and nice to ride. It's quite revvy and the power is really good so it's an easy bike to ride. I also had some issues starting the Husky 250 but once going this bike was really nice to ride. It pulled in third gear around the corners where all the other 250s needed to use second – except for the KTM - which was great as it was easier to then get up on the pegs out of the corner and not lose any momentum heading down the following straight.

This Husqvarna felt bigger compared to the other 250s but this wasn't much of a problem for me. Smaller riders may find this to be a problem though. Saying that there is a lot of plastic on the sides of the bike and it's nice to be able to grip it with your legs. You're always in contact with the bike which makes changing direction a lot easier.

The KTM 250 is also a really good bike - the suspension felt good, as did the brakes and the engine as always was seriously strong.

My favourite 250 today was the Honda - it was my favourite last year as well. For me it's just the best all-round package with the engine, suspension, brakes, handling and ergonomics. It just feels right whenever I ride it and does absolutely everything I ask of it. You can take wide lines in the sweepers or turn tight. It's just an all-round good bike. It's not the fastest bike - I thought the KTM was the fastest - but for me and for what I want a bike for the Honda ticks all the right boxes.









#### JAMES DUNN

All of the 250 class bikes are good bikes. Jumping on all of them today I felt good and comfortable on every bike. All of them are good in their own way and you can get any of them going fast.

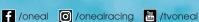
However, KTM and Husky definitely have an upper hand in terms of the engines at the moment. Those two bikes are definitely faster and in terms of outright horsepower they definitely have all the other bikes beat.

Despite that however I do prefer the power of the Yamaha they've got the delivery set-up really nicely. I found that both the Honda and the Kawasaki handled nicely and you were able to turn in nice and tight but they just don't have the power that you want, particularly compared to the other bikes.

I found the Suzuki to be a nice and easy ride. It didn't react too much and if I were to set it up for myself I'd do a few changes to make it a bit stiffer. But as standard I found it to be really nice. easy and so smooth. You could do exactly what you wanted on it and you'd have no big or bad reactions from the bumps and whatnot. I did enjoy riding the Suzuki.

My favourite 250 was the Yamaha 250F. It handles really nicely, it feels really sharp and there's a wide range of power that you can use. It's not the fastest bike but I really like the way the power comes in and how it revs out for quite a long time. That together with the handling really suits the way I ride.













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#### CARL NUNN

The Suzuki is a nice bike but it's not the fastest. The Honda is slightly faster and feels very nice in the way it handles and how the suspension works. It feels like I can really attack the ruts and the jump faces when riding the Honda.

However, the Kawasaki has definitely got the legs in power over those two by quite a way and I was surprised about that. The KX has strong power and revs hard - it will pull me out of the corners in third gear no problem at all.

I really enjoyed the Yamaha. It had the whole package. I could push hard on that bike and use any line I wanted. I didn't feel nervous on jump faces or ever feel like I would get cross rutted. It's not as fast as the Husky or KTM but it's not far off.

The KTM was the first of the Austrian bikes that I got on. The power was massively different to the two Japanese bikes that I been on immediately beforehand. I was in third/fourth in the corners and it's deep out there but the KTM was pulling me through it no problem. I tried the same with some of the other bikes and they wouldn't pull through it. Out of the two I felt the Husky was slightly quicker on top. I also felt the KTM was difficult to keep in the corners and the ruts whereas the Husky felt a bit easier and had better steering.

That said my favourite 250 from today was the Yamaha. I think the bike has the whole package. It handles really well and the engine is strong. It's perhaps not as fast as the KTM or Husky but the whole bike itself is just nice to ride and I felt that I could put it where I wanted to put it. I really enjoyed riding the Yamaha.

#### DAVE HOWARD

They are all really good bikes and they all have their own characteristics that stand out to me. I felt that the Yamaha handled very well. You could throw the Yamaha into a rut and it would feel so planted. However, I felt the Yamaha motor was all bottom-end - it would pull you out of the corners very nicely but once you get to a long straight you are left wanting just a bit more on the top.

The KTM gives you that bit more at the top and it also handles very nicely too. I would say that the KTM isn't quite as strong off the bottom as the Yamaha but it's got a nicer curve and good power all the way through

The Husky was very much the same as the KTM although I felt that the Husqvarna didn't quite have the same level as power today. I ran both the KTM and Husky in the aggressive map - the ability to choose is one thing I really do love about the KTM and Husky machines. It's so easy to switch between map settings on those bikes.

I also had a play with the traction control option on those bikes and felt that really come into effect when I went high and wide in the corners where it was a little more slick and greasy. I felt it just stopped the back end from twitching out too much. It's definitely a cool feature to have at your disposal.

The KX 250F is a bike that you jump on and instantly feel at home. I didn't feel like I needed to change anything at all. From the first corner until the last I felt comfortable, I felt in control and I found it to be a very nice bike in terms of the handling. However, I wasn't the biggest fan of the suspension on the Kawasaki, I think it needed a bit more setting up than the other bikes.

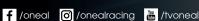
The Suzuki was a very nice bike to ride - it's just so smooth. It's definitely the smoothest bike out there and with the track being as rough as it was today the Suzuki was in a league of its own in that respect. However, the engine is underpowered compared to the KTM. Riding the Suzuki felt like sitting in granddad's armchair at times - it's very comfortable but a lot of the time you are left wanting a little more.

My favourite 250 had to be the KTM. The Husky was very similar but I felt that the KTM just had that bit more power. I don't know whether it was just because I rode the KTM in slightly better conditions than the Husky but I felt the KTM had the slight edge. The KTM 250 was fun to ride and it handled great. It's definitely ready to race.



















#### MAX HIND

As always the KTM 250F topped the class in terms of outright engine performance. It's hard to argue with the power of the orange machine. For me it's just a case of utilizing that power in the most efficient way which I found to be fairly difficult in the rough and tough conditions of Buttercup Farm. That being said I always feel comfortable on the KTM machines and I do love just how easy it is to toggle between map settings and traction control.

In comparison to the KTM the Yamaha utilises a nice smooth power curve that is particularly strong off the bottom. When riding the Yam the suspension feels so damn plush. It's probably the best set-up bike out of the box and it just feels very planted and incredibly stable the entire way around the track. It's very confidence inspiring. However, I'm not the biggest fan of how wide the bike is and in direct comparison to the other MX2 machines the Yamaha does feel a bit bigger, a bit heavier and not so agile out on the track.

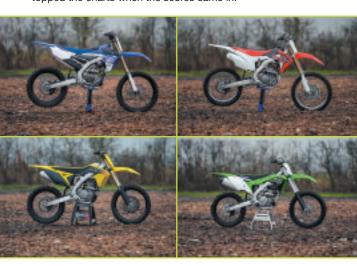
In complete contrast to the Yamaha the all-new Kawasaki 250F feels very nimble with its slimline design. The KX is a very comfortable bike to sit on - Kawasaki have nailed the riding position here. It feels perfect. On track this translates to a very nimble and agile ride, you can really turn in tight and lean her over in the corners. The only downside is that the Kawi just doesn't have the legs to compete with the likes of the KTM.

As always the Honda CRF250R is a nice solid bike and you know exactly what you're going to get. It handles nicely and turns well but it really is just lacking in the power department. I find the Honda 250 to be the only bike that is noticeably lacking in power and it's a shame because it's a very solid bike in all other areas.

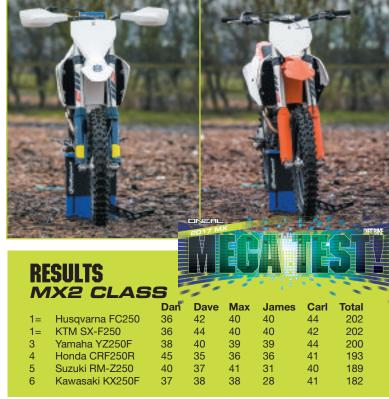
Once again the Husky is very similar to the KTM in terms of power and performance. I find that it's in the handling where the two bikes differ. The Husqvarna seems to be a little less stable in the front end but I do feel that I'm able to really lean the bike over in the turns which is always fun.

I have to say that I was surprised at what became my favourite 250F of the day. I was not expecting the Suzuki to come out tops but she did. If there were two words to describe the Suzuki it would have to be silky and smooth. I felt so at home and so comfortable on the bike and when conditions are as rough and gnarly as they were today that is key. So I really enjoyed riding the Suzuki, I gelled well with it and I really feel that I logged my fastest times of the day on the yellow machine.'

Despite our two fastest riders both choosing the Yamaha as their best 250 bike of the day while the guys at the lower end of the speed spectrum chose the more mellow Honda and Suzuki bikes as their number one picks it was the Austrian pairing that topped the charts when the scores came in





















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Hmmm, 350 or 450? Red, white, yellow, green, blue or orange? There's only one way to find out who topped the charts and that's by reading on...

#### DAN GROVE

The KTM SX-F 450 was the first bike I rode today. I think someone got busy with some silicon spray for the photo shoot as I really struggled to grip the bike with my legs. Maybe the other KTMs were like this as well but when I rode them they'd already been ridden so I didn't have a problem with those.

I changed the map switch to the stock option as I noticed before riding that it was on the aggressive setting. All the 450s have plenty of power so I didn't feel the need to have more.

This bike desperately needs a gripper seat cover as the one that it comes with offers very little grip. I know that there are a few good options in the KTM Powerparts catalogue so if you're considering a KTM for this year then I'd recommend purchasing a cover while you're in the dealership. As the track hadn't broken in I can't say too much about the suspension or handling but it felt solid around the whole track and had really good brakes.

The KTM 350 may well be the bike I would choose if I had to race in the MX1 class. It felt like a very well tuned 250F with a lot of torque and great handling. It didn't feel heavy, the suspension has been improved and it was a really good all-round package.

The Husky 450 was really good. It had nice power which worked well in the deep conditions.

Just like the Suzuki RM-Z 250, the RM-Z 450 would benefit hugely from a larger front brake as well as a more modern bar bend as both Suzukis share the same front brake the lack of braking power is more obvious on this bike. The stock handlebars have a lot of sweep and seem to bend down at the end - they just feel really strange.

Besides that the bike had great balance and plenty of power on tap as you'd expect from a 450. It was really easy to cut tight lines inside of the deep ruts found on the track today. Also the black rims are a really nice addition and help modernise the bike. The grippy seat cover helped keep me planted when exiting corners.

The Kawasaki KX450F was all new for 2016 and remains relatively unchanged for this year. The brakes are really strong thanks to the oversized front disc that comes as standard. The stopping power is really strong and I love it! The handlebars are a really nice bend and the bike features a really flat seat so moving around on this bike is really easy. A nice broad powerband and suspension make this bike a joy to ride.

The Yamaha 450 has a different sound to the other bikes. It's not a bad reflection on the bike it's just really noticeable when you first ride one. Once again the wide rad shrouds are very noticeable but you do get used to them after a few laps. I also noticed the seat was very firm like on the 250. The power delivery is quite aggressive out of the corners so I felt it was a bit harder to ride than some of the others but overall a very solid package.

The 350 Husky was my favourite of the 350s and although I chose the 450 Honda as my favourite 450 if I had to race in the MX1 class I'd choose the 350 Husky. The Honda is a brilliant 450 but the power would be too much for me over the course of a race. This Husky was really easy to ride and the power is right between a 250 and 450. It has its own power delivery that is midway between the two and it was manageable for me the whole ride. The suspension felt much improved over last year's model. There may be a technique to starting the bike using the electric start but I did have a few issues getting it going. Maybe a combination of it being new and it being a really cold day...

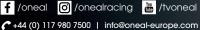
For the 450 class I thought the all new Honda was the best bike. When you sit on the bike it just feels like the 250 and it handles in a similar way. You can put it where ever you like, it sits in ruts really well and the power is manageable for a 450. The combination of engine, handling and the brakes makes this the best all-round bike















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#### JAMES DUNN

In the MX1 class I found the same thing again with the Husqvarna and KTM. The power that they are able to put out is just so much more than the other bikes. Even the two 350 machines have incredible power - I found that they were maybe on par with the other 450 machines in terms of power. I also found that the 350s rode so nice and the engines felt far more free.

I struggled with the Yamaha 450 today - I just didn't get on with it too well at all. I couldn't quite put my finger on whether it was just the way it was set up or how the power comes in but I just didn't feel great on that bike and it was probably the worst bike of the day for me.

I was really surprised about how good the Suzuki 450 was and how good I felt riding that bike. It was the same sort of feeling I had on the 250, I felt that I could go where I wanted and do what I wanted. Again it was really smooth and very nice to ride.

I was impressed with the new Honda 450. There's a lot of power there and I found it was just a case of trying to utilise that power in the right way. I did find that quite difficult to do as there is just so much there.

Now that Kawasaki have changed their bikes I feel that they really suit me. I found the 450 to be really comfortable. It suited my height and the riding position was really nice for me. However, I found the engine to be a little flat still especially in comparison to the KTM. But I think that's true for all of the bikes - they are all missing that extra bit of punch that the KTM and Husqvarna offer.

The KTM 450 was my favourite. It just had so much power - you could do anything you want with it. Once you get the set-up right it handles nicely. So for sure the KTM



#### DAVE HOWARD

The Yamaha was a bike that really surprised me today. I've ridden the 2015 and '16 model and I wasn't so keen on the light front end found on those models. The front end of the 2017 Yamaha 450 is still light but it does feel better. The thing that surprised me the most is how the bike felt so planted in the corners - you can lay the Yamaha 450 in a nice deep rut and it will just sit there. It doesn't want to jump out or anything - it will just sit nicely in the rut and pull you all the way through the corners. It was a really good bike in the turns.

The Kawasaki 450 is much the same as its 250 counterpart - you throw your leg over the bike and you instantly feel comfortable. Everything just feels right. The Kawasaki has nice power all the way through the range although I did feel that the brakes weren't brilliant. Apart from that little disappointment the KX450F was a solid all-round bike.

Another bike that stood out for me was the all new Honda 450. The power out of that bike is

just unreal. It was the fastest 450 out there. Just jumping on it and touching the throttle it was immediately noticeable. I used to own a Honda 450 myself and compared to the previous model this new Honda 450 is a completely new animal. It's unreal and it's hard to explain just how new and different it is.

However, there are a few things that I didn't like in regards to the new Honda. I felt that it was very small and it felt like your weight was put over the front of the bike the entire time. That wasn't a comfortable riding position for me. I also wasn't a fan of the brakes on the Honda 450. The brake lever itself was really hard and as soon as you touched it - it felt as if you were going over the bars.

The KTM and Husky 450s are again very similar bikes and generally great all-round machines. They have good power output, the suspension out of the crate feels nice and the handling of the bikes is awesome. There were some deep ruts out there today and the KTM and Husky 450s inspired a lot of confidence to do exactly what you wanted to do.

The Suzuki 450 is by far the smoothest bike in the MX1 class. I really liked the suspension on the Suzuki as it was very forgiving. The track got choppy and became a really good test for the bikes and the Suzuki handled it very well. It was very forgiving and so smooth the whole way around the track. To ride a track like we had today at speed you need to be smooth and the Suzuki allowed you to be just that.

Again in the MX1 class I really did enjoy riding the KTMs. I rode the KTM 450 this morning when it was really deep and the conditions were tough but I found that you could just throw it into the corner and it would just pull you out of anything. I rode the 350 a little later on in the day and it was such a nice, fun bike to ride. You could lean it over in a rut, roll on the power and it would just keep pulling. If I had to pick a favourite between the two it would have to be the 350. You could rev and ride that bike a bit harder, it has enough power to get you out of trouble when you need it, yet it's not overpowering. It's just a really good, solid bike in all departments.



#### CARL NUNN

I started the day on the 350s. The KTM felt better balanced than the Husky. Obviously, the power of both felt very similar however I did feel that the Husky had a slight edge in that department.

I was pretty surprised with the Honda 450 as soon as I got on it. I felt like I was very far forward on the seat and I thought that may make the front dive or wash out but it didn't. The front end stayed up and it was a nice positive feeling and created good steering. Overall I was impressed with the Honda. The other noticeable thing was that the bike had almost zero engine braking which was very noticeable straight away.

The KTM and Husky 450s were very strong and very hard hitting. I did mess about with the maps on them and ended up back on the easiest map each time. On the aggressive map the bikes just wanted to get away from me and I didn't enjoy that. I did struggle a bit turning them - the front wheel was climbing out of the ruts compared to the Suzuki which was planted all the time.

I was very surprised with both the 250 and 450 Kawasakis as I immediately felt comfortable on them as soon as I rode out onto the track. They had a great handlebar position and felt nimble as well. They were very easy to move around on.

The Yamaha 450 felt much lighter than Yam 450s of the past. The power is nice and strong throughout the rev range.

My favourite 450 today was the Suzuki. For me the 450s aren't about power - they're about the ease of riding and smoothness of power. The Suzuki handles nicely and turns well. It feels quite low with the bar mounting position and there's more than enough power for your average guy or even your quicker guy. I felt some of the other bikes were too hard hitting which made them harder to ride.





#### **MAX HIND**

Without doubt the most anticipated bike of the year - and the reason we waited so long to do our shootout - was the all-new Honda 450. This bike is freaking fast. At times it's too fast. Particularly on a track as rough as Buttercup Farm the insane power at your disposal when riding the Honda can, for me anyway, be more of a hindrance than a help.

The first thing you notice as soon as you ride out on the new Honda is how your weight is over the front end of the bike. This is a bizarre sensation and can be a little difficult to get used to but once you do and you learn to trust the front end you can unleash the full capabilities of this machine. You can turn so tight and put the Honda in places that would be very difficult to do on some of the other 450 machines.

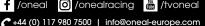
Much like its smaller sibling the Suzuki 450 was so satisfyingly smooth. It feels so plush and it handles great. The suspension tackles anything in its path with grace and because of this the Suzuki 450 inspires so much confidence. Although it's not the fastest 450 machine out there I don't necessarily believe that's a huge downside. I'd rather have usable power over hyperspeed any day of the week.

Talking of hyperspeed the KTM 450 definitely has the potential to beat the record and complete the Kessel run in under 12 parsecs. In other words (and for anyone who doesn't know the Star Wars movies line by line - Sutty) this bike is fast - like really fast. Yet at the same time the KTM 450 still feels relatively small and agile. It can definitely play mind tricks and fool you into thinking that you're riding a smaller more manageable machine. That's great in terms of handling and agility but it could easily get you into trouble if you don't respect the













#### RESULTS MX1 CLASS

		Dan	Dave	Max	James	Carl	Total
1	KTM SX-F350	40	44	40	40	43	207
2	Husqvarna FC350	41	43	40	37	42	203
3	Husqvarna FC450	39	44	39	39	39	200
4	Honda CRF450R	45	35	39	38	42	199
5=	Suzuki RM-Z450	40	35	40	39	43	197
5=	KTM SX-F450	38	44	38	39	39	197
7	Kawasaki KX450F	40	43	38	33	41	195
8	Yamaha YZ450F	39	42	38	30	40	189

power at your fingertips.

The Husky 450 is once again very similar in that respect. But as with the 250 models I found that the Husqvarna gave me the confidence to attack the corners just a little bit harder.

In comparison to the animal that it was just a few years ago the Yamaha 450 has evolved into a far more manageable monster. She still feels like a big, wide machine but the engine has been tamed to provide a far more usable power curve. Don't get me wrong the Yam is still fast and although perhaps not as fast as the Austrian bikes but it's not far off. In comparison to years past the Yamaha 450 is a much more user friendly, enjoyable bike to ride with that signature plush Yamaha feeling.

As with the 250 version the new shaped Kawasaki 450 is very nimble and oh so comfortable to sit on and ride. This new slim shape allows you to turn tight and find new lines. The power is fairly mellow compared to its adversaries, but that mellow power is very useable. I'm a fan.

I am by no means a pro rider so with that in mind I'm definitely not looking for the biggest, baddest, fastest MX1 machine. I can never really get the most out of a 450 so my favourite MX1 machine of the day has to be one of the 350 bikes.

It's so tight between the KTM and Husky when picking a favourite I keep flip-flopping between the two. But for now I'm going to have to give the edge to the KTM. I just felt slightly more balanced and I found the riding position to be a little more suited to my style. I enjoy revving bikes a bit harder and feeling like I'm going fast even if I'm not. I'm not the biggest guy around so in my mind riding a 350 over a 450 makes sense. I'm a big advocate of the 350 movement and I think they make a lot more sense for a lot of normal weekend warrior level guys.

In a surprising turn of events a 350 machine has won the MX1 shootout against the more powerful 450cc machines. It's understandable that the lower level riders would prefer the more useable power output of the 350 but it's truly a testament to the quality of these bikes – and verifies the need for the 350 class machine – when pro level riders are ranking them so highly in an MX1 shootout.







KTM SX-F350 207 2 Husqvarna FC350 203 3= Husqvarna FC250 202 KTM SX-F250 202 5= Husqvarna FC450 200 5= Yamaha YZ250F 200 Honda CRF450R 199 Suzuki RM-Z450 197 KTM SX-F450 197 8= Kawasaki KX450F 195

NEAL MEGAT

Suzuki RM-2450 197
KTM SX-F450 197
Kawasaki KX450F 195
Honda CRF250R 193
Suzuki RM-Z250 189
Yamaha YZ450F 189
Kawasaki KX250F 182





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# Hawkstone International Motocross I DIJSEL

EACH AND EVERY FEBRUARY THE BE WISER INTERNATIONAL SERVES UP A TIMELY REMINDER THAT HAWKSTONE PARK IS THE ROUGHEST, TOUGHEST AND GRUFFEST MOTOCROSS TRACK ON THE PLANET AS IT TAKES GRIP OF THE WORLD'S FASTEST RACERS, CHEWS 'EM UP AND THEN SPITS 'EM BACK OUT AGAIN...

f you're anything less than 100 per cent prepared there's never a good time to ride Hawkstone Park. Race it in the depths of winter when it's soggier than a boarding school dorm biscuit and no matter how fit or how ready you are the place will still find a way of grinding you down and reminding you that racing motocross perhaps wasn't the best career choice after all...

Of course, for every group of riders that suffer in the relentless ruts, boundless bumps and horrendous holes there'll be a handful that rise to the occasion, relish the punishment and raise their game to master the conditions. Those guys leave with their confidence levels through the roof while the rest... well, the rest know they've still got work to do before their chosen championship kicks off.

know they've still got work to do before their chosen championship kicks off.

And it's not only the riders that suffer. Hawkstone's power-sapping sand not only puts a stack of strain on motors, clutches and running gear but has a habit of blocking radiators and making things run hot. Bikes with steam and smoke billowing from overflow pipes and breather hoses are commonplace and more clutches are swapped between motos at this race than at any other place or time

While the history books will show that Pauls Jonass and Max Nagl were the winners on the day – with the Latvian running 1-1 in the MX2 class while 'ze German' went 2-1 in MX1 before acing the mixed-capacity Super Final with a dominant start-to-finish victory – the real story is told in the strain on the faces of the sand covered racers, the smoking bikes, endless ruts and the size of the crowd.

There's a reason fans flock to Hawkstone for the International and it ain't because of the tropical temperatures. This race offers a real reminder of what motocross is all about and long may it continue...



Only one rider raced a road registered bike at the International and that was Red Bull KTM's EnduroGP ace Nathan Watson who embarrassed more than a few full-time MXGP racers by blasting by them with a headlamp strapped to the front of his bike and a registration plate on the rear...

After a useful pre-season spent in sunny Spain Jake Nicholls was firing on all cylinders at Hawkstone Park despite feeling the cold. Even after ploughing Shaun Simpson off the start in moto one Jake held it together for a strong performance after fighting hard with the factory boys to eventually finish fifth. Race two was a different matter though with a technical issue ending things early after a promising getaway. A solid 10th in the Superfinal wrapped things up nicely...





Rockstar Husqvarna's Max Nagl was the big winner on the day acing the MX1 overall before going on to dominate the Superfinal. It was a fairly typical Nagl performance to be fair with the German star man-handling his 450 around Hawkstone with seemingly boundless amounts of energy.



One of the many two-stroke 125cc riders in the MXY2 class, RFX KTM's Joel Rizzi would have won the award for youngest racer on the day if there were such an accolade. The 13-year-old from Denbigh had a tough time of it in qualifying and with terrible gate pick struggled with bad starts all day. The tough day was capped off with a huge crash in the final encounter – fortunately there was no lasting damage and the second-generation racer will be back in action in time for the MX Nationals season opener.



Aussie newcomer Hunter Lawrence surprised many with his speed, style and tenacity in his first ride as a member of the Suzuki factory squad as he beat both his more experienced team-mates and only just missed out on making a podium appearance.







MINIMALISTS HAVE ARGUED THAT LESS IS MORE FOR CENTURIES NOW BUT WILL THAT MANTRA WORK FOR THE EWC?

Words and photos by Future7Media

"Evolution, not revolution," are words that Enduro World Championship promoter Alain Blanchard has used time and time again. And since his appointment by the FIM to 'promote' enduro's top-tier series he's introduced numerous changes all aimed at making the championship 'more professional' – whatever that means.

In just a few weeks' time the series that has given us so many of the world's best enduro riders will follow MXGP's lead and feature just two 'senior' classes – Enduro 2, for any bike up to 250cc. And the flagship EnduroGP class, for bikes over 250cc. From a five-class structure way-back-when to three in more recent years – Enduro1, Enduro2 and Enduro3 – the EWC will soon usher in its newest two-class era.

The changes, surprise, surprise, haven't been met with riotous applause. While most can see that 'one winner' would certainly simplify things in the eyes of the everyday man, how much those outside the sport really care anyway is what lies at the heart of the discussions surrounding the new two-class structure. Should efforts be made to make it easier for the general public to follow enduro sport, or should changes be made to ensure a stronger, healthier sport for those already involved?

From the outside things look pretty simple. Traditionalists, wearing their rose-tinted goggles, don't like the fact that the world championship is moving further away from the multi-capacity class structure of the 'good ol' days'. But there's a little more to it than simply not liking change. The world championship is kind of stuck between a rock and a hard place. Changes are needed (the list of 'must be better at...' is long and increasing) but many argue that changes need to focus on bringing riders into the series, not shutting them out.

Becoming an ever more professional series is what promoters' ABC Communications and the FIM want. A kind of less is more equation – less classes, less riders, fewer available titles, more deserving world champions. Hard Enduro – the very big, very painful thorn in the EWC's side – sees just one person win. The EWC wants a little of that, with the EnduroGP class winner being 'the one'.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. That's how many see things, having become used and familiar with the three-class structure. By putting more focus on just one class means that possibly just one rider/team/manufacturer/country will get all, or certainly the lion's share, of the limelight. Is that good for the series? Will that allow young talent to work its way to the top? Well, that's what really concerns most.

Starting to streamline the EWC over a decade ago, some feel that these changes should have happened five years ago. The view held by many is also that enduro is a participant sport and a kind of 'the more the merrier' approach is best. That said the powers that be see things differently. If the changes work we have a championship that is truly unrecognizable from what it was when Fast Eddy was in his prime.

If it fails, that's might not necessarily be a bad thing... as long as reactions are swift and constructive and new beginnings come quickly. But that'll never happen. The FIM's enduro commission doesn't move quickly on anything. If having two classes change little, or effectively drags the championship backwards, we'll know that the direction the series has been heading in ever since Knighter really started hitting his stride hasn't been the right one.

Interestingly, ABC Communications says changes are 'what the manufacturers want'. Many aren't so sure that's entirely true!"



















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#### ABC COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR AND ENDUROGP PROMOTER

"We are making these changes firstly because it is the will of the manufacturers. KTM, Husqvarna, Yamaha and Honda asked us to make an evolution of the sport. We understand from them the sport is very popular with a lot of riders, a lot of media interest and so, we look at the changes we can make.

"We have to face it that you have to make more than superficial changes to make something new. That is why we have decided to include two or three races with some new format. That's why we start in winter conditions with a new format of races like WRC, like rally car and this will be a very tough race in March—we can say this is an extreme race because of the conditions, the length of the days is very long.

"We will also be back in the UK because, you know, it is nice to have a race in Turkey or Greece but for a manufacturer these are minor countries for the market of enduro bikes. The

goal was always to have enduro where the main market is so it is why we wanted to go back to the UK – and to Germany especially at the traditional venue of Zschopau. In the UK we have the chance to do something new and exciting with the event format too.

"We have a nine-race schedule next year which is a better schedule from March to October. More or less one race per month is better for visibility for the image of the sport. We will see of course but I believe it will work. If it doesn't work we will come back.

"For us enduro is a very demanding sport – day and night, winter, spring, summer and autumn, rain, mud, dry and dust, night-time with lights on. Why not to make the races have all this? The best rider in all these conditions is the one who comes out the number one.

"As for having two classes for 2017 it is the same thing, we have to improve. If I remember 20 years ago we have seven classes [laughs]. I know it is maybe good for some to have many riders in many classes but to have five riders competing for a class is not possible. 10 or 15 years ago we have big capacity four-stroke

bikes and 80cc bikes but these bikes don't exist anymore.

"There has been a reduction and it is also a request of the manufacturers to reduce the number of classes, not because of costs but for example, if you look at E3 in 2016 we have only three manufacturers and sometimes we have nine or 10 starters – if we are to give a title and a world championship for that many riders the value isn't good.

"The EnduroGP is to be the 'King' class for sure – this is the goal. Manufacturers wanted to keep the small bike class because the bike market is very important for small bikes. For sure enduro is not motocross but we now have a format which is very close to MXGP. This way everybody can use the bike they want but for two classes not four or five classes. A title has to have value, you need to fight for a title. We saw in 2016 that the smaller manufacturers can do it, we have Beta and TM who are winning the world titles and this is good for the sport. It's great to have new guys coming in and winning world titles, like Steve Holcombe."















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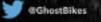
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# **ANTOINE MEO**

#### FIVE-TIME ENDURO WORLD CHAMPION

"The sport has to progress but I don't know if this takes it in a good direction. To make a good show the sport needs to have some good steps, some evolution but I don't know if it is the best direction for the riders. For the 'show' maybe but for the rider, I don't know.

"In the past the sport is always going up, going forwards, with the level of the riders and the salary. This is how it should be every year. But I fear in one year this is going 20 years back and starting again.

"For sure the young riders like Nathan (Watson) and Steve (Holcombe) are making a big step forward for the sport but for the salary it is not. If somebody is working in a factory they get more money than many professional sportsmen in enduro and that's not normal. It's not right. I hope the future will be better but I don't see that "









# ANDY HOLZL

#### ROCKSTAR ENERGY HUSQVARNA FACTORY RACING TEAM MANAGER

"It's a good way to start a new kind of enduro because we need to take a step forward. It is a step forward in the right direction because it is trying something new and that way you can learn. Hopefully, bring more spectators to the races, make the races more spectacular and interesting.

"We [Husqvarna] push really hard for the change in classes for EnduroGP so that we have one world champion. A real world champion. Only one champion, like in other motor sports. I think that is a good way forward.

"You need to have a world champion that is really good on every different type of track. Someone who rides fast in all conditions. Different track conditions are good for riders to improve and evolve as riders."

# JOHNNY AUBERT

#### TWO-TIME ENDURO WORLD CHAMPION

"It's just my idea, my opinion, but I think if we have more classes we have more riders who can finish top five in their class and hopefully earn some money for riding well. If you are in a small team you can fight for the victory in one class. If you have two classes it is impossible because the factory teams have the top riders.

"Changing to two classes is good for the show but not for the riders. I think it is good for the top three, who earn money for winning, but after that? Also for the small teams, who maybe have a rider finishing in 20th position, what's in it for them? I don't know if this is good because for a smaller team they cannot get good visibility for their sponsors. Nothing. They just travel, give money to compete, ride well but finish in 15th place. They get nothing in terms of visibility. Nothing comes back for that. With more classes you have more chance to give visibility to sponsors, more chances for younger riders to show themselves.

"For me, it's not really a good idea to have such a specialist race in the snow. Not for the amateur riders. For the rest of the season I think it is quite okay, just I don't know if this is a good direction or not. It is a very big, very expensive hurdle at the start of the series."









# GIACOMO REDONDI

#### ENDURO JUNIOR WORLD CHAMPION

"I don't think it is a good thing. I understand the reason to make the Enduro World Championship more like other championships, like motocross, but I don't think enduro needs this. It is a sport like no other. Enduro has always been professional teams and riders competing together with private teams and talented amateur racers. It is bad for the many non-factory teams because suddenly they have no place to race and see their riders have a chance to get good results. The factory teams have the money and the best riders but it is making it more difficult for smaller teams to be a part of the championship."



### ALAN RANT

#### US NATIONAL ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP PROMOTER

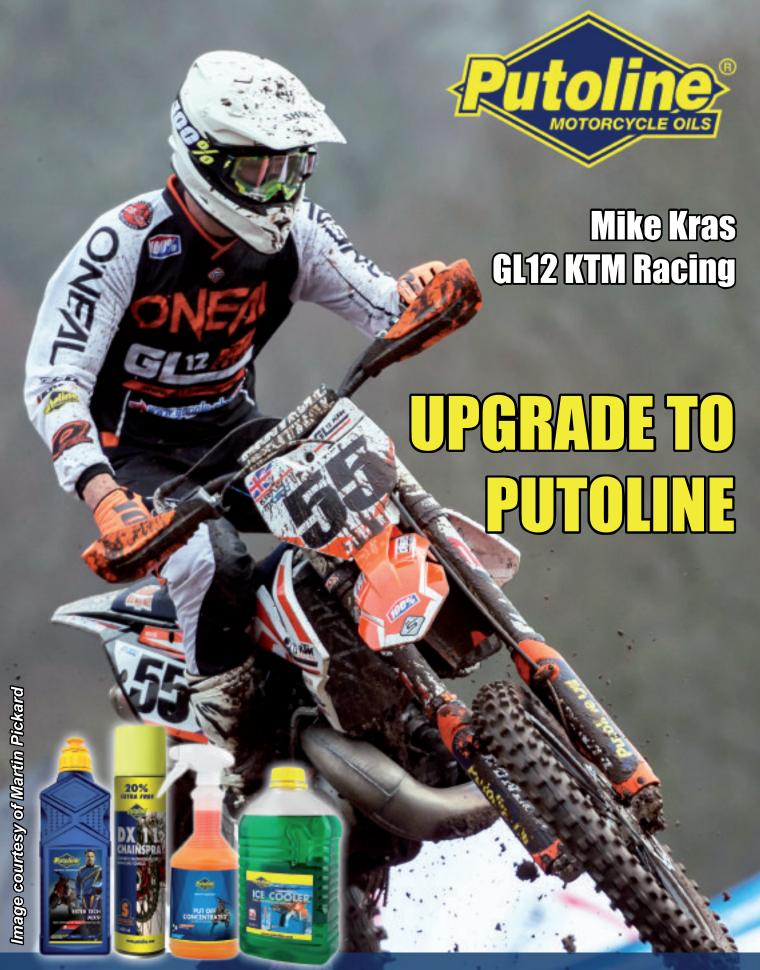
"I follow the EnduroGP series personally but I don't think it has a very big following in the States – there is so much racing going on here that most want to follow riders that they have seen or are familiar with.

"I'm not sure how the new two class structure will work out, it seems like it won't draw too many new riders because each class will be larger now and most won't be getting good results, getting to the top.

"EnduroGP only seems to want the top-level riders, so compared to us (the US National Enduro Series) their rider entries are much smaller. They don't need as many classes, but maybe if they had more classes they would get more riders involved.

"Our enduros are designed to handle many more riders so we have a long 65-mile loop instead of a shorter loop and run two laps. We had 857 riders at our first event of 2017 last week so if we had a shorter loop the first riders would catch the later riders. We like to have the whole family involved so we have 28 classes so son, daughter, dad and granddad can compete in different classes but ride the same course together. If we only have a few classes for all of those riders they would lose interest if they were say 150th in their class."

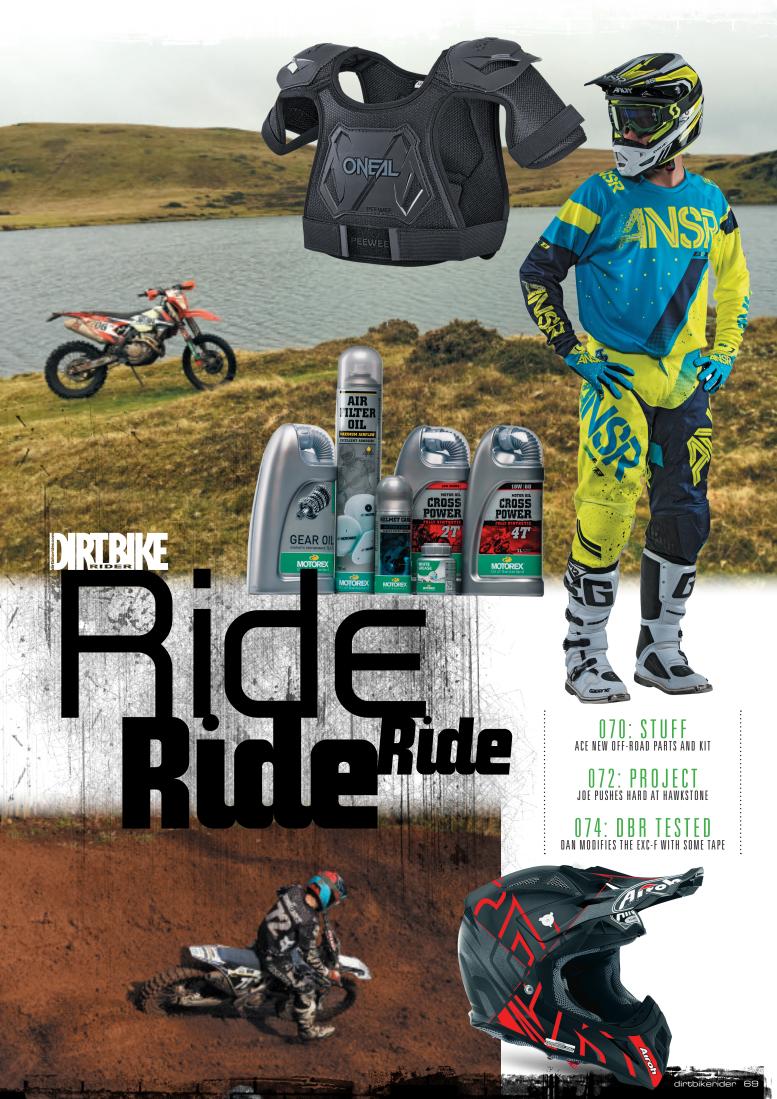




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DBR PROJECT PILOT JOE CADWALLADER'S FINALLY TURNED A WHEEL IN ANGER THIS SEASON AT THE HAWKSTONE INTERNATIONAL MX WHERE ALL THE HARD WINTER TRAINING PAID OFF...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Captain Dave

he winter of tough training was finally put to good use when DBR Project pilot Joe Cadwallader ripped to third in the MXY250 class on his RMJ Academy Husqvarna UK machine at the Hawkstone International at the start of February.

After spending most of the New Year bashing out the laps in France and Spain it all came together for the 17-year-old at the season's first big fixture where he was in impressive form.

"Hawkstone was a good weekend," he says. "Before that we went to Skegness to train in deep sand and did two days across there. I felt comfortable in the sand and I felt that it helped me a lot. I qualified second and made two passes on my fast lap. I was also the only rider to go faster after my first timed lap so I felt strong - I was only something like 1.2 down which was okay.'

A couple of unplanned off-track excursions didn't help his cause during the day but his new-found confidence was clear to see, despite a lack of experience of running at the front proving costly.

"In the first race I started okay, passed a couple of riders to move into fourth and then jumped off the track and crashed trying to get back on. To top it off I stalled it near the end but still managed to get sixth.

"The next race I went down to the start early, prepped my gate and got the holeshot. For the first few laps I was feeling comfortable and pulling away and I led until two laps to go when I started to make lots of mistakes.

"I'm not used to running at the front but I coped with the pressure until the last few laps. Then my pace dropped and I jumped off the track in the same place as in the first race but, luckily, this time I managed to stay on although it wrecked my rhythm. I still brought it home in third which I was real happy with.

"I got another holeshot in the final race and sat in third for most of it but stalled it and slipped back to fourth in the last

Following his first off-season of training with the RMJ Academy on the track and in the gym at Liverpool John Moores University his fitness is exactly where it needs to be at this time of the year and he's heading into the opening round of the Michelin MX Nationals looking for a good result on the FC 250 Husqvarna UK machine.

The training over the winter has made a big difference - all the motos and the gym work have made me much stronger on the bike. In long races I used to worry about tiring so I'd pace myself but I didn't save myself at all because I was confident I'd be strong for the full race. I didn't really get tired at all but when I was leading I did tighten up.

"I'm really looking forward to FatCat. I've been there a few times since Hawkstone along with a lot of stubble field tracks. The fitness is there so I've laid off the hard motos and instead worked on some speed work.

"I'm feeling comfortable on the bike and now I know what the pace was like at Hawkstone I definitely think I can put it on the podium if not win.'

DBR will be following Joe and the RMJ Academy Husqvarna UK machine every month so stay tuned for further updates...



### DAN GETS ALL MACGYVER ON THE EXC-F AND FINDS A FIX FOR SOME PESKY PROBLEMS...

Words by Dan Grove Photos by Dan Grove and Matt Dean

f you read last month's update on the KTM 350 EXC-F you'll remember that I had an issue with water reaching the air filter which is never a good situation. That issue is caused by water – either rain or stuff splashed up on stream crossings – getting onto the rear mudguard and then running down the groove that's moulded into it that runs along the bottom edge of the seat.

Washing the bike without a bag over the air filter or a filter wash cover will give you the same problem. The water then drips onto the top subframe rail and runs forwards before it finally gains enough weight to drip down onto the air filter.

If you don't ever ride when there's a chance of rain or any

water crossings or puddles then don't worry about this although if you own one of these bikes you're probably keen to ride it in all weathers so it's worth taking a few minutes to cure the problem.

You'll need to whip the seat off and clean up the radiator scoop panel and mudguard – about an inch either side – of where you're applying the tape to bridge the gap between the plastic panels on the bike and then it's job done. From now on any water that reaches this area will then run down the mudguard and be diverted by your duct tape bridge and run down the side panel on the outside and keep your air filter safe and dry. Since this mod I got three rides in over the same trail and no water had got in there so I can assure you that this works.





















As mentioned last month I was on the hunt for traction and it came in two forms. A pair of Metzeler Six Days Enduro tyres made there way onto the long-termer KTM as did a map switch with a traction control option that can be found in the KTM Powerparts catalogue. I'm no stranger to Metzeler tyres having used their motocross tyres for a number of years and the enduro tyres didn't disappoint either!

The rear tyre was a huge improvement all round especially in situations where I needed to lift the front end up over big holes, ditches or logs which was much easier and predictable than with the standard road legal tyre on grass or mud as well as firmer sections. The front was also impressive and an improvement over the standard front tyre but as I mentioned previously, I really liked how well standard front tyre performed.

As for the map switch, this was my first time installing and using a device like this so prior to installation I made sure to read the instructions on how to install it which is not the 'man' way to do it. But I'm glad that I got in touch with my feminine side as I needed to know where to plug it into.

The guide instructs you to remove the handlebars from the bike to install the system but you don't. You do need to remove the left side grip which is a doddle with the standard Odi Lock On grips as it just needs a T15 torx bit to remove it from the handlebars. Then remove the kill/light switch and the clutch perch and slide on the traction control map switch.

Reconnect the components that you have just removed and then disconnect the front light/number plate. The lead then plugs into a sealed up connector where you just have to remove the cap and then connect the two together. I routed the lead from the map switch alongside the kill switch lead and clutch hose and then secured it all together with some trusty cable ties. Reconnect the front plate and that's the job done.

As for the functionality of the switch, Option 1 is the standard map that's in the bike and Option 2 is a much more aggressive map. When the TC button is pressed this switches on the traction control. I couldn't think of a situation where you'd want

the traction control on while having an aggressive map so I only used it when the stock map was selected.

The aggressive map really livened up the motor from the mid-range upwards and gave the bike a more motocross style power delivery which was really noticeable on faster and flowing sections and when negotiating long uphills.

Combining the number 2 map with the new rear tyre (after riding the first part of the ride with map 1 on so that I could compare the two), this gave the bike a much lighter feel as it was easier to get the power down and lift the front end over faster obstacles and also when exiting corners the bike responded much quicker and changes in direction felt much easier as well. The second map worked really well on rough straights where with little effort you could be up on the pegs keeping the front end light and just let the bike do the work.

With the traction control on with the standard map, it really worked well in slow rooty sections where I was using first and second gears. It made the power delivery much more controllable and predictable which made negotiating some really tight sections a lot easier.

Enduro – and motocross for that matter – can leave you quite frustrated with a high heart rate when riding in difficult situations such as tight woodland sections or deep ruts so anything that can help with this is worth investing in.

I turned it on for any wood or rocky section that come up on the rides that I've been on. I think I'll swap the position of the traction control switch with the horn and kill switch so that when selecting a map or turning on or off the traction control it will be much easier to do while riding as you had to take your hand off the bars to make any changes which isn't always easy to do while riding. The part number for this is 790.39.974.044 if you fancy giving it a try and the same part fits all EXC-F models.

Next month there's a few more additions to the bike so I'm keen to see how the full package works before this winter project finds itself a new home up north, maybe...











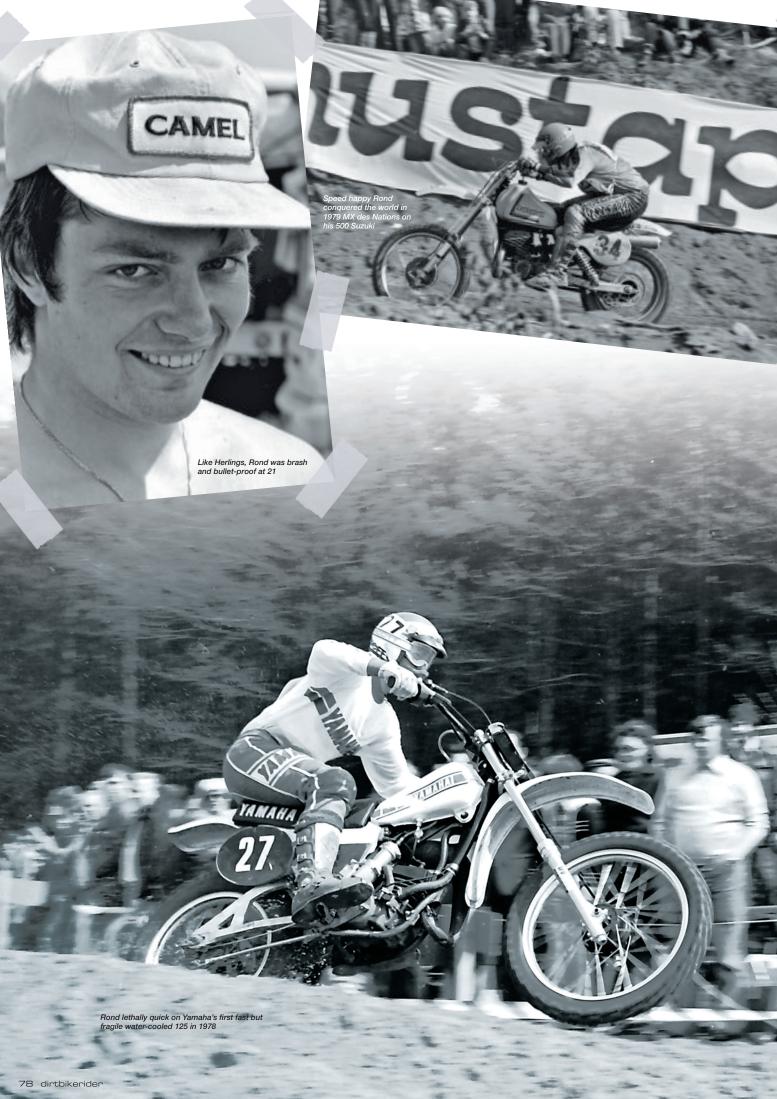














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Born on December 5 1956 in Ede, near Apeldoorn 'Rondo' had his interest in motocross stimulated by a father who not only raced himself (as Herlings' father Peter did) but also made his own motorcycles! Gerd Rond was his son's number one mentor, mechanic and fan.

'My father began making Rond motorcycles using Austrian Sachs engines," explains Rond junior, still bristling with that brash confidence he became Dutch junior champion in 1971 at the age of 15, that sassy riding style already in evidence. "There was a small track near where we lived," he recalls. "We let them build crazy things with the bulldozer and I trained there a lot. When father made bikes I could train every day. My technique is still amazing even though I can only do three laps! I jump every double without thinking about it. Look at the Americans today. They can train every day on their own tracks!"

Gerard's promotion into the 125 junior class >>



lasted for one race. Immediately upgraded into senior competition, by 1973 he had reached third place in the Dutch senior 50cc championship and second spot in the 125s. And the following year, still campaigning his lone Rond-Sachs against a howling pack of works Van Veen Kreidlers, he won both national titles. Gerard moved on to a Yamaha in 1975 but amazingly at 18 was too young to enter the European 125 championship. Imagine the outcry today! He falsified his age on an FIM licence and ended the season 10th overall. He also won the Dutch 250cc national title for the first time.

The following year he leapt into 250GPs and performed with sporadic brilliance amidst a deluge of mechanical breakdowns, his finest moment in the Dutch GP at Lichtenvoorde where, despite breaking his collarbone a fortnight earlier, he reached fourth place in race two before his rear shock collapsed. He finally scored points at the last round, sixth in Sweden and nailed another Dutch 250 national crown.

But in 1977 Rondo reverted to 125GPs with factory support via Amsterdam for himself and Belgian Andre Massant. Gerard pressed reigning world champion Gaston Rahier (Suzuki) all year, winning his first GPs in Czechoslovakia and Poland, finished second in the world and won a third successive Dutch 250 title.

Into 1978 Rond made a big impact in the Hants Grand International at Matchams Park

on a 400cc Yamaha before embarking on a second 125GP campaign. His fast but fragile water-cooled Yamaha still tuned by his dad, Rondo took on the combined might of factory Suzuki duo Rahier and Akira Watanabe in one

of the sport's epic seasons.

Second to Gaston in the opening Austrian round and the first Italian race, he suffered his first DNF in the second moto in Macerata. But he retaliated by pulverising the opposition in the white sands of Lanklaar, Belgium before doing the double right back on his own doorstep in Apeldoorn. This launched him into the title lead until the first race at Vesoul, in France where, chasing Rahier on hard-pack blue-groove his steering damper broke. He hit back, tying on points with grand prix winner Watanabe in Yugoslavia but a disastrous day at Laubus Eschbach in Germany, where engine breakages put him out of both races, dropped him to third place in the table.

From then on Rond comprehensively outscored the Suzukis. He outran Rahier in two exhilarating contests round the fast slick jumps of Meyrin, near Geneva and won the first moto in Poland then crossed the Atlantic and finished a blazing second to his Yamaha stable-mate Broc Glover in the USGP at Lexington, Ohio.

Twice second to Watanabe in Spain kept his chances alive into the final round at Strijbro, in Czechoslovakia where Gerard stayed up late at the organiser's pre-race celebration in the local town hall – he was always a bit of a party animal! – yet still beat the Suzukis in the first moto.

It wasn't enough to prevent third-placed Akira becoming the first – and so far only – Japanese world champ and when Gaston won race two he stole second place in the series from a disappointed Rond by a single point as Gerard faded to fourth behind home hero Jiri Churavy. Yet Rondo had challenged throughout an amazing year despite a major power-to-weight handicap, the burly Dutchman tipping the scales at 82 kilograms against the pint-sized Suzuki pairing, Akira weighing in at 64 kilos and tiny Rahier 59!

Rond won eight motos that year, the Suzukis seven apiece, but what set him distinctively apart was that classy riding technique. Elbows pinned, poised on the footpegs he in every sense anticipated 1980's American style icons David Bailey and Johnny O'Mara. But his racing hero was Bob 'Hurricane' Hannah, who he faced in the des Nations contests at the end of his epic 1978 season, when Bob represented the USA and Rond's team-mates included Gerrit Wolsink and Peter Herlings!

Showing stunning form in a seismic field of superstars Rond twice ran top five with Hannah on his 250 until thwarted by punctures in the Trophee des Nations round a gnarly, stony track at Kester in Belgium. And 250GPs was where Gerard wanted to go in 1979 – but Suzuki Japan had other ideas.

They were determined to poach the man who had almost derailed their 125 ambitions. "I like to go 250," says Rond. "I was fast that year on a 250. But they said 'we cannot handle that in our organisation. We must put you straight on a 500'."

Over the previous two seasons Gerard had become a close friend and training partner of Holland's other major MX force Gerrit Wolsink, the dentist from Amsterdam who finished 500GP runner-up to his Suzuki team-mate Roger de Coster in 1976. They shared weight-training sessions twice a week and Rondo would also go out cross-country running and



## THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

RONDO TERRORISES TARMAC TEAM-MATES

One entertaining incident during his fortnight testing in Hamamatsu during the winter of 1979 demonstrated the absurd natural talent of this Flying Dutchman. Double world road racing champion Barry Sheene and his team-mates were testing their Suzuki RG500 grand prix weapons.

"We had a day off so I went to the race track," smiles Rond. "I persuaded their test rider to let me try his bike, for fun. I knew I was too heavy but after 10 laps I was less than a second slower than Sheene and faster than his Dutch team-mate Will Hartog. They take me off the bike and make me sign a contract never to tell the story for at least two years. But I think after over 30 years I can tell you now!"

cycling in the woods around Apeldoorn. Now they found themselves reluctant 500GP teammates in 1979, Gerard because he wanted to be on the 250 and Gerrit because, according to Rondo, "he was afraid that I was faster than him!"

Despite his own misgivings winter testing began well in Japan. "I found my position on the bike was the same as Roger," he says. "We shared the same footrest and handlebar positions. I was five or six seconds faster than these guys in training. 'Now you definitely have to go 500' said the factory bosses. But I was too crazy for the 500! My first race for Suzuki I was fastest in timed practice by far then twisted my knee badly in the race. I was still driving the 500 like a 125. Also the bike was fast. It had a lot of horsepower but was dangerous to ride!"

Gerard started the 1979 500GPs well enough with top four finishes in France and Sweden but faded to 10th overall behind the experienced heavy hitters of 500cc racing, though he scored a strong second place behind Andre Malherbe at Namur the day Graham Noyce clinched the crown. "My speed was there but my crashes were too," he chuckles. "And I used to kill the brakes!"

Finally, in the Motocross des Nations at Ruskeasanta in Finland Rond showed his true colours, beating Noyce, Harry Everts, Malherbe and De Coster in a wicked first race. He gated with gusto again in the second moto and, with Wolsink in tow, looked to be leading Holland to their best ever finish until his RM500 cruelly ran dry 200 metres from the chequered flag. Then came the 1980s and a new era dawned...





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JAMIE MCCANNEY - AND YAMAHA - ARE AIMING FOR WORLD ENDURO SUCCESS IN 2017...

Words and photos by Future7Media

urprisingly still only 22 years old, Manxman Jamie McCanney is on a fast track to becoming one of Great Britain's most successful enduro riders. With two world titles already under his belt, his trophy cabinet is filling up fast. For 2017 he's spearheading Yamaha's official assault on the Enduro 2 World Championship and is one of the favourites in the

running for top honours.

But along with the spoils of victory have come more than his fair share of defeat with numerous frustrating injuries hindering his potential for even more wins and possible world titles. Now fighting fit for the new season ahead, he's ready to take his Outsiders Yamaha Official Enduro Team WR250F to the top step of the podium.

WR250F to the top step of the podium.
Catching up with Jamie as he rubs shoulders with Yamaha's entire motorsport outfit of MotoGP, Superbike and MXGP teams at their official launch in Milan gives a clear indication of just how much effort both Jamie and Yamaha are putting into winning a world enduro title in 2017. It's serious business and neither parties are messing about...

**DBR:** Despite two world titles to your credit you've also endured more than your fair share of injuries, does that frustrate you?

MM. "Of course it's not fun being injured. Sometimes it seems to happen to one person more than it should and I seem to be that guy with a fair few injuries in my time but that's the nature of the sport. It's not always been my fault. Hitting a wild dog during my first world round in Chile was a freak thing and sometimes stuff is out of your power and maybe coming back from one injury leads to another. I guess everyone has to go through it some times. "But I know what I'm capable of. I would be more worried if I returned to the track in 10th. Last year I rode at 70 per cent and still managed to get podiums. I guess you have to take it on the chin and try to come back stronger and more focused. It's strange though because I would consider myself as having a smooth riding style — I'm not hanging it

**DBR:** Your career has gone injury, 125cc title, injury, Junior title and then injury. Could that mean 2017 will bring the Enduro 2 crown?

out more than I should."





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JM: "Fingers crossed. I know there's a pattern but trust me it wasn't deliberate! But it does show when I come back from an injury I'm still capable of winning a world title. Being world champion is the end goal — that's what I'm targeting. And this year I've got one of the best teams and bikes in the paddock to do it. Hopefully come October I'll have a world

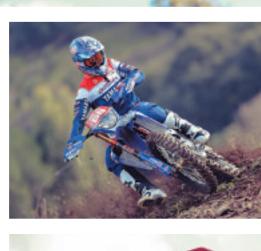
**DBR:** With a merging of sorts for 2017 the newly formed Enduro 2 class will be stacked with talent and we've got 250 two-strokes racing against 250 four-strokes for the first time too. What are your thoughts on the year ahead?

JM: "No matter what class you race it's never easy. All of the factory guys have factory rides for a reason so it's going to be a tough year. It will be interesting to see how things go with a single 250cc class regardless of it being a two-stroke or four-stroke. It's going to be a big change. Sometimes there will be advantages over the other but it's swings and roundabouts. I can't really say at this stage who's got the edge. Enduro is different than motocross, it's not that long ago Antoine Meo won outright on a 125 two-stroke so I don't think I'm at a disadvantage on the 250F.

"Starting out strong will be key to a good year. If you look at Eero Remes he won the title last year by starting strong. He seemed to do the damage at the beginning of the year. After that he then didn't have to win – he controlled the pace and rode within his limits when he needed to."

DBR: Nathan Watson was one of the surprise guys of 2016? Being close friends did his results surprise you? JM: "Nathan and myself have been good friends for a very long time. We've grown up racing together in motocross so I knew what he was capable of and wasn't overly surprised

There was a point during last season when we were both joint second in the championship but we still walked all the special tests together and trained at >> "Being world champion is the end goal"













home together. We were friends before racing so you can't let what happens on the race track ruin a friendship. We're happy when the other person does well. I'm one of the first to congratulate him and vice versa he'll be the first to shake my hand too."

DBR: The McCanney brother "rivalry" has long been part of your professional career. You'll race against your brother Danny in Enduro 2. At this stage in your careers is there any sibling rivalry?

JM: "We've both been racing at world championship level for a long time, there's no rivalry between us. Similar to racing Nathan, if there's a problem in the test we tell each other. At the end of the day we want each other to do our best and once the racing is finished it's back to being brothers. In enduro we never race against each other head-to-head - it's always against the clock - so it doesn't matter."

DBR: Looking at the 2017 EnduroGP championship calendar are there any potential game changer races? JM: "Finland and Hawkstone Park are going to be key events this year. Certainly round one in Finland will be make or break. It's not one for the faint hearted. I think it will show who's on top of their game

straight away. We're being told that day one will be a 12 hour day with 15 unique special tests. That's going to be hard to get your head around. Riding snow and ice, pretty much blind for the first time will be a major shake up.

"I'm looking forward to Hawkstone Park in September too. I've never raced a home GP before so that is exciting and the format is a first for EnduroGP too. We've sprint enduro on day one and then a three hour GNCC style race on day two. There's a lot going on for one round. A flat-out three hour race in sand will really highlight those who are fit and those who are not. It's good to bring top level enduro back to the UK too. There are a lot of my friends who don't full understand what it is we do so it will be nice to have it in our backyard for a change and put British enduro on the map."

DBR: With sprint enduro and cross-country racing creeping into the EnduroGP World Championship the traditional format of enduro has changed. There are also rumours of adding an extreme race too. What are your thoughts on the direction >>

# "Winning the ISDE is very much on the cards. We've got the talent right now to do it."





"It will be nice to

have EnduroGP in

our backyard and put British enduro on the map."

the series now seems to be taking?

JM: "I'm fairly open-minded about it. In my opinion enduro is the most complete form of natural off-road racing on a motorbike. You've got to competent at everything to succeed. We've got motocross tests, enduro tests and extreme tests. We've now got snow racing and cross country endurance racing this year. I don't really know how we could adapt extreme enduro to fit in but if it's something that helps the sport

grow and reach a bigger audience then that should be a good thing. In the past the terrain was very repetitive, it was like all rounds were dry and dusty. Making it varied has got to be the only way to ensure that the most all-round complete rider becomes champion at the end of the year because that's what enduro is all about."

**DBR:** Now entering year two with Yamaha you switch to their official EnduroGP team. How is testing and pre-season preparations going?

JM: "Although this is year two with Yamaha it feels like I'm starting afresh because I'm moving to the official Yamaha EnduroGP team. Last year I rode for an Italian team but started out injured. I missed the pre-season and only started riding two weeks prior to round one in Morocco. It was my first time on

Yamaha machinery too so there wasn't time to test. We had a base level but that was about it.

"I did manage to podium in almost every race I rode but coming into this year it feels like a different story. Marc Bourgeois, my team manager, has been riding and developing the WR250F for the last two years and he's brought it to the point we're at now. I literally just sat on the bike and it already felt really good. It's nice to get on something

that's already well set-up and doesn't need much work to make fully race ready. The team are right behind me too. If there's a way to improve anything they do it. And having Marc by your side is a huge asset to have. He knows the sport, knows the bike and knows me as a rider. Things are good.

"Being here at Yamaha's official press launch alongside the MotoGP, road race, Dakar and MXGP riders puts into perspective how serious

and important they take enduro. We're not just individuals riding bikes in a forest. There's a bigger picture to it. They want to be world champions in enduro as much as everything else and they want us to represent them on all levels – not just on the results sheet. They took us to Yamaha's European Headquarters in Amsterdam along with the MXGP, rally and road bikes guys for media training. They don't just hand you a bike, they take you on board, make you part of a bigger team and that's really good."

**DBR:** We saw you race a WR450F at the ISDE – did you want to stay on the 450F and go to the EnduroGP class?

JM: "For 2017 I'm in Enduro 2 but obviously at some point the goal is to jump up to EnduroGP

so the ISDE was a good week – a little experimental even – to show what I could do. I decided to ride a stock 450f because the engine is bullet proof – they race Dakar on it – so I knew I'd get an 'easier' week of maintenance. I also wanted to have that extra power to put me higher up the running order. I enjoyed it a lot and felt I showed what I'm capable of on a 450F and on standard machinery too.

"What the ISDE proved to me is that I'm capable on any sized bike.



# JAMIE MCCANNEY ON...

"Firstly Marc is a great rider. He was French Enduro 1 champion last year and he rode world enduro up until 2015. He's won races, been on the podium and lived the highs and lows of the sport. He understands from our perspective what enduro is about and I think that's a good asset for a team manager to

### HAVING LOIC LARRIEU AS A TEAM-MATE

"We were team-mates before at Husaberg and then Husqvarna but we never trained together. Already this year I've been to France and stayed with Loic and Marc. Loic won two world rounds last year so it's good to be working closely with a guy at that level. We can both learn from each other."

### LIVING LIFE ON THE MAINLAND

"Last year I made the move from the Isle of Man to Nantwich to live with my girlfriend. I was racing the Italian championship along with the worlds and she was living on her own. We were sort of in a long distance relationship. Moving base to England to be with her has been great. I'm also close to Nathan Watson so we can train and practice together. One hour down the road from me is Lee Edmondson, who's been a huge support to me too. Richard Dyke of Hitachi Capital helps me with the use of a van and Isle of Man Sport has been very involved with my programme. I'm enjoying the change.



I went there with a stock bike and put in a good ride. At the moment I'm happy on a 250F. I'm enjoying riding it, so I'm not in a rush to jump up to the bigger bike. I feel like I can adapt. If I had to, I could jump back on a 125 two-stroke and still be decent. That's a good asset to have but for this year I'm happy enough being a 250F guy.'

DBR: Being part of Great Britain's ride onto the second step of the ISDE podium must have been a special highlight of 2016. What was that like and has it fuelled the fire to go one step better? JM: "Looking back at the ISDE and finishing as runner-up was an incredible result for the team. It's been a long, long time since Team GB were on the ISDE World Trophy podium. It was a proud moment to be part of that. I can't thank everyone enough for the support they give to help put us there. It's not just about what we do as riders but what everyone does as a team to get that result.

"On paper it might look like we should have finished second but the ISDE is so unpredictable. The new rules for 2016 of having just four riders and not being able to drop out added a lot of pressure. You've got to finish to be in with a shout. Spain and Italy both lost a guy, that helped us, but we still couldn't afford to ease up.

"Moving forward and I think winning the race is very much on the cards. We've got the talent to do it. If we all come together as a team and things go our way then there's no reason why we can't win it. And

**DBR:** Britain is currently a hotbed for international enduro talent. Is this something we can build upon for the next generation of riders following you guys? JM: "British enduro is the strongest it's ever been and I'm proud to be a part of it. We showed at the ISDE we're the second strongest nation in the world and we've a very realistic chance of winning it. Looking at both EnduroGP and extreme enduro and British riders are leading the way and filling up the podiums. There are now more British riders on factory teams than there's ever been. I'm only 22 years old, I'm still young in the sport and will hopefully have

a long time left. And it's the same for a number of guys so the future does bode well.

"I do hope that we're inspiring the next generation of riders to come. Hopefully younger riders look to what we're all doing and see that it's possible. That might make them more determined to get out and do it. But it's tough. It's not easy to make it as a professional rider. It's probably the toughest it's ever been as spaces are limited. But I do believe that if you put everything you have into it and are capable then the results will come and so too will a ride on a factory team.'

that sort of shows just how strong British Enduro is right now."

Enduro is right now." complete form of natural off-road racing on a motorbike. You've got to competent at everything to succeed."





WHEN IT COMES TO MOTOCROSS - AND MOTORCYCLING MEDIA HEAVYWEIGHTS, ONE MAN PACKS A BIGGER PUNCH THAN ALMOST
ANYONE ELSE. FROM HIS FORMATIVE YEARS SNAPPING SCRAMBLES IN HIS
NATIVE NORTH EAST TO HIS CURRENT JOB AS THE VOICE OF EUROSPORT'S
BSB COVERAGE, WHAT JACK BURNICLE'S FORGOTTEN (AND IT'S NOT A
LOT) PROBABLY WASN'T WORTH REMEMBERING ANYWAY. IN THE FIRST
INSTALMENT OF A TWO-PART SPECIAL FEATURE, WE TRACE HIS LIFE
FROM A CAR-MAD KID GROWING UP ON TEESSIDE TO HIS FIRST FORAY
INTO CONTINENTAL GPS...

Words by Sean Lawless

an you imagine how stressful it would be to prep a bike for Carlos Rivera? Or design a training programme for Aldon Baker? Or tutor Jeffrey Herlings in sand-riding technique? Well that's pretty much how it feels to interview Jack Burnicle.

Photographer, designer, journalist, commentator – when it comes to motorcycle media he really is a (wait for it) Jack of all trades and, contrary to the old adage, master of them all.

I've known Jack for donkey's years so I'm not nervous about the actual interview process – in fact, I'm looking forward to spending a couple of hours being soothed by the smooth raconteurial skills that have helped make him the voice of Eurosport's two-wheeled coverage for the last quarter-of-a-century.

I am, however, more than a little apprehensive about what he thinks of the finished feature. I mean, what if he doesn't like it?

There's something about Jack that's timeless, an impression that in some part must be down to the youthful enthusiasm – backed up by

a mischievous sense of humour – he brings to everything he does.

"I have to say I feel better for the fact that now I've got a couple of commentating colleagues who are two or three years older than me," he says with a smile, "including Barry Nutley who was a great sidecar motocross passenger in his youth. He's a lovely man."

What's important to note from this first exchange is that Jack packs almost every sentence with information. He doesn't have to mention Barry Nutley, he doesn't have to mention his esteemed BSB commentary colleague's background in sidecarcross, he doesn't have to qualify his comment with what a top bloke Nutley is. But he does and it's precisely the joy he derives sharing knowledge that has made him so successful as a commentator, a career path he took long after he was firmly established as one of the best photo-journalists in motocross.

Of course, it's much more than the simple sharing of knowledge that sees him held in such high regard behind a microphone. It's also the sheer volume of facts and figures – pure

motorsport minutiae – he has at his fingertips. How can he, for instance, in one breath describe a photo-finish from the 1964 250 GP at Imola and in the next wax lyrical about MotoGP star Dani Pedrosa's upbringing near the long-defunct Sabadell circuit?

"My memory's dreadful for where I've just put something down but all this other crackpot stuff sticks in my head. There are also things that have kind of got lost in the dusty corners of my mind but it only takes a chance remark to bring them back."

During the 12 unbroken years I commissioned work from him – first for MXUK and then DBR – I always assumed his articles must have involved hours of research. But sitting in the first floor front room of his obviously much-loved and equally much lived-in home in Wallasey with the mighty Mersey lapping languidly (talking to Jack, the master of alliteration, has an unavoidable effect) at the bottom of the street, he trots out a stream of stats.

In the course of writing this feature I double check everything and he's unfailingly on the >>



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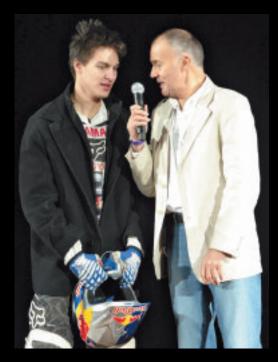




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money – even down to his description of the black and white photo of Dave Bickers and Don Rickman crossing the line together at Imola 53 years ago.

Born in County Durham ("Land of the Prince Bishops" as he never fails to remind me), he grew up in Billingham-on-Tees where he developed an early passion for racing cars.

"As a boy I was only interested in four wheels

– I was quite completely mad about cars and
motor racing and the history of motor racing. Dad's
generation always had motorbikes but he wasn't in
the least bit keen in me showing any interest in that.
He certainly wouldn't have encouraged it.

He certainly wouldn't have encouraged it.

"A school teacher – Chopper Grand – actually took me all the way over to Aintree to see the 1962 British Grand Prix that Jimmy Clark won. Sadly my then hero Graham Hill only finished fourth so I was a bit dejected. I did try and take some pictures with my mum's Kodak Brownie camera at the Melling Crossing which didn't come out so well but that was quite an exciting experience."

The artistic leanings that have shaped the course of his life were evident from an early age but they didn't do him many favours during his adolescent years.

"It was a rugby-playing grammar school and I was the sad, solitary boy with terminal acne as my dad described it. If you're good at music and art then you're not quite made for that environment and it wasn't the happiest of times for me."

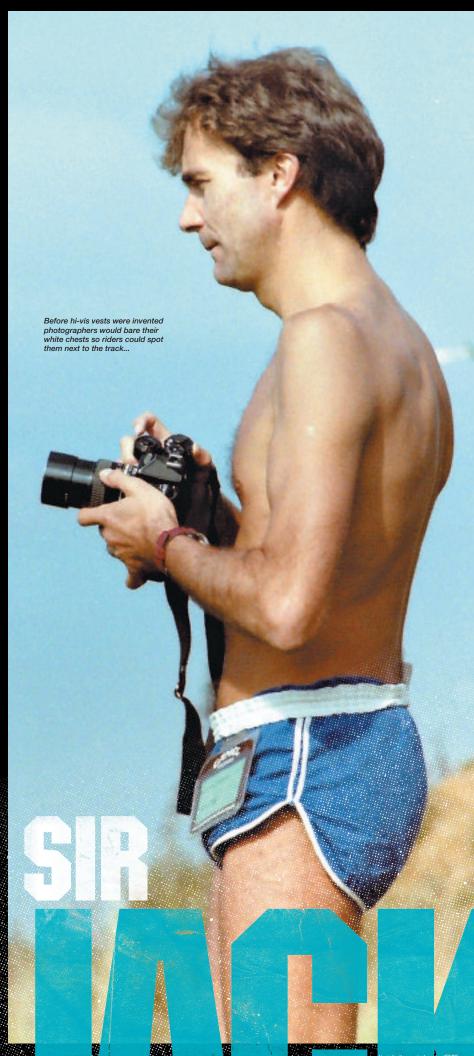
Jack obviously gets his literary and artistic streak from his father, Stan, who was the chief librarian of ICl's Agricultural Division at Billingham and a talented musician.

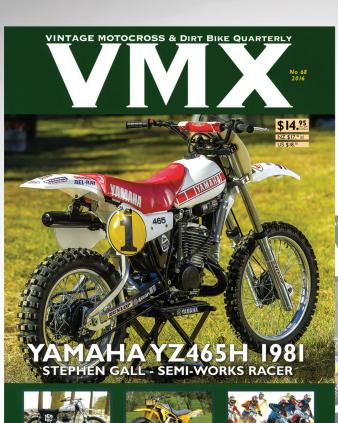
"Dad was ludicrously intelligent and obsessed with music, an amazing man. He was self-taught and inspired by Fats Waller. He ran two choirs and had the Stan Burnicle Singers, he was an organist and choirmaster, song-writer and raconteur. He didn't have much time for kids though – he wasn't the greatest of dads but he was a man to be admired. His music was his life really so there was music around the house all the time.

"Mum was a wonderful little livewire who worked at ICI and actually met dad in an ICI air raid shelter. He was there in a yellow shirt – dad used to dye his own clothes – and no-one else in the world was wearing a yellow shirt at the time, well certainly not on Teesside!"

Stan also, albeit unwittingly, contributed to the shift of Jack's affections from four wheels to two...

"What happened with the bikes was ridiculous really. A guy who I never met who was a friend of my dad's had a load of old motorsport magazines that he wanted rid of. So I received this treasure trove of

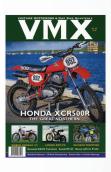




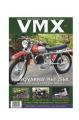


- > Yamaha YZ465 Stephen Gall
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Imola MX 2016 Yamaha YZ250U











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magazines from the 1950s – when my ultimate hero Juan Manuel Fangio was racing – and he just happened to throw in four small hardback A5 books on motorcycle racing by a guy called GS Davison.

"These were old books – about 1949, 1950 – with some great pictures and it was the pictures I think that hooked me. So the next time we went down to the local shops I asked mum if I could have a Motorcycle Weekly. Isn't it ludicrous but that was all it took to ignite an interest in two wheels."

Reading about something and experiencing it in the flesh are two different things and Jack had to be patient before he received the affirmation that set him on a course that he's steered ever since.

"My dad very reluctantly let me get a Villiersengined 197 James Captain for my 16th birthday and a guy in the next street who had a 250 Norton took me to my first scramble at Hutton Conyers near Ripon. It was about 50 miles away which seemed like a huge journey and when I got there I was just blown away by how exciting it was. It was actually a television meeting so it had people like the Lampkins racing there and Joe Johnson who was a bit of a Greeves star from down south. It was wonderful.

"The next one was much nearer home at Great Ayton – Woodhouse Farm, an amazing place on the side of the Cleveland Hills near Middlesbrough. I took mum's Kodak Brownie along – that's how I learned to pan because you couldn't do anything else with that thing.

"That was when I first got to talk to one or two of the riders and I was amazed how convivial it all was, how friendly they were. Completely different people to anywhere else in my life – builders, farmers and country boys generally."

He paints an almost pastoral picture of scrambling back in the early to mid '60s but while I suspect there's a certain rose-tint to his memories – the reality of racing a 150kg-plus Gold Star must have been ball-breaking – they were undeniably great days for the sport and for Jack.

"There were tracks everywhere and stuff going on every weekend for those lads to race in and that's why you had these great local stars and some of them are still friends to this day. People like John Watson who contributes now to Trials and Motocross News – a lovely man, he raced Gold Stars – and Ronnie and Maurice Tate, two farmers from North Yorkshire who I still see now and then.

"These guys were really competitive so when you got a big meeting in the North East they could run with the big names. Before I knew him Ronnie had beaten Jeff Smith at Boltby in 1962 in a 250 round there, when they were called the ACU Star. When a 500 ACU Star round came to Carlton Bank – the Cleveland Grand National – Dickie Preston on his three-year-old Gold Star was beating the likes of [Vic] Eastwood and [Chris] Horsfield on their factory bikes and there was a massive crowd.

"You could go off whenever you chose and find something to watch so it was very accessible and also it was out in beautiful countryside which was a massive attraction for me."

After his school years among the rugger-buggers, salvation was at hand for a teenaged Jack who finally found an environment in which he could thrive.

"At school I was always the boy who could draw so I went to art school. I had no idea really what else to do. I didn't realise there was a perfectly good art school in Middlesbrough so I ended up going to Newcastle and from there to Leeds where I did a degree in graphic design.

"When I went off to art college I could really take advantage of their darkroom facilities and even borrow their camera equipment and work a bit more at the photography side of it on the dubious basis of exploring the imagery in an artistic way."

Jack's passion for motocross saw him living a double life as he balanced his studies during the week with weekends at the race track. It was also around this time that he started travelling to meetings with riders – a practice that he would later elevate to an art form.

"Motorbikes have got a bit more of a trendiness these days – they had none of that back then and people would wonder what the hell I was doing at weekends when I would go off to these events.

"I'd been running a 350 Ariel Red Hunter and then my dad bought me a 1936 Morris 8 tourer from a back garden in Stockton so I was running that as well. I was occasionally having reliability problems and that was when the first rider – a wonderful man called Rodney Moore who was a baker in Huddersfield – started taking me to meetings.

"He ran a 400 Husqvarna and was a great rival of Terry Silvester back in the '60s. He'd pick me up outside Leeds Town Hall if I needed a lift – he'd turn up in this beautiful Wolseley 6110 with a trailer on the back with the bike on it – and away we'd scoot."

Pursuing his education allowed Jack to expand his horizons in more ways than one.

"I did a post-grad at Manchester. I'd moved away from the North East and suddenly there was West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire and Cheshire. Visitors would come over the border because they didn't have a race on in their centre and that's how I met Roger Harvey when he rode at Post Hill just outside Leeds in 1969.



"This Midlander came across to me and asked 'have you got any good photos?'. He was one of those riders who saw everything that was going on around him – you could never hide in a bush and have him not see you when you were trying to take pictures of him.

"Some guys would never see you at all

- Geoff Mayes and Pete Mathia had that
blinkered vision when they were racing – but
Roger always damn well knew where you were."

After leaving art school at 23, Jack headed south in search of fame and fortune.

"The only place to go as a qualified graphic designer was London. That's where everyone set their sights on and that's where I went.

"My dad had this old 10 hundredweight yellow ex-Wimpey Austin van and he gave that to me and my mate Darryl for as long as I needed it. So we chucked all our belongings in and went down to London. I had 80 quid in my back pocket and that was it.

"We must have been nuts! We had no work, we had no prospects, nothing at all. We were sleeping on the floor of a friend of Darryl's in Belsize Park but eventually the woman got a bit narked with us being there so we found somewhere in West Hampstead to live but we still didn't have work.

"I ended up at a tiny ad agency in Camden Town above the Plaza Cinema so when we had to do an all-nighter because we had some fairly punishing deadline there were these huge red neon lights flashing on and off throughout the night through the windows.

"I lived in London for the next 20 years and suddenly other things came into play like the Tweasledown winter series on the site where the original Scott Scramble took place in 1924."

Jack's 'proper' career took off as he moved from the ad agency into mainstream publications – some reputable, some a little less salubrious.

"I went more into the magazine world. The first magazine I worked on was Vogue which rather overwhelmed me – I was too young really, too young and green. That was when Lord Snowden and David Bailey and guys like that were around the corridors of power. It was an amazing place to be.

"So I stayed mainly in the women's magazine world as an art editor and designer and then, because of the recommendation of someone at Woman magazine, I ended up at Knave as art editor there.

"That was entertaining! I could use all the best illustrators in town because they liked to have their stuff in the skin mags. It was good quality four-colour printing and they loved it.

"The great thing about that life in London was the way the whole arts and media thing was interlocking. Your whole life involved being around graphic designers, illustrators,

photographers, fashion designers – it was a great time to be in London right through the '70s and '80s. It was wonderful."

His London life may have been interlocking but his weekend passion continued to be separate and by the early '70s he had progressed from selling prints to riders to getting his shots published.

"I think the first photograph I had printed was in 1973 in Motorcycle Weekly and it was a picture of John Banks with his new Cheney BSA and then weirdly – and I really don't know how it came about – I took some photographs at Brands Hatch of a road race for Motorcycle News around that time."

Through his friendship with Roger Harvey, Jack was expanding his horizons in line with his Midlander mate's riding career which led to his first experience of continental GPs.

"Roger was always pivotal in my life because of becoming friends so early on. He had gone to Pembrokeshire and ridden the 125 GP in '75 on a Yamaha riding for the wonderful late, great Dougie Wheeler who'd had this schoolboy drop a 125 Yamaha into him. He suggested Roger raced it in the grand prix and he ended up with something like a seventh and a fourth and because of that Roger decided to do the 125 GPs in '76.

"So they did the 125 GPs with Roger on his own most of the time as mechanic, driver, cook and rider and he finished fifth as leading privateer. It was Roger who said to me [cue Jack's dreadful Black Country impression] 'Jack, the 125 French GP is at Cassel which is only 40 miles from Calais – why don't you come over and then you can come back with me?'."

During my time as DBR editor one of the highlights of the magazine month was when the latest Burnicle's Beat – more often than not documenting, in Jack's typically florid, flowing style, his experiences following the GP circus – would drop into my inbox. And it all started with his Cassel adventure...

"I finished at Knave on the Friday teatime and embarked on this bizarre journey where I went by tube to Victoria Station to get an evening train down to Dover. I took the night crossing and then caught the train to Paris but I had to stay awake to get off at a place called Hazebrouck and that's where I would be able to pick up a tiny little train that would take me towards Cassel.

"Cassel's a real hilltop village that was one of the last strongholds when the Allies were retreating before Dunkirk in the Second World War. It was the hottest summer on record and I was dressed bizarrely in brief shorts, a pair of ladies' sandals

 I was a proper media luvvie fashion victim at the time carrying my camera case and sleeping bag.

"When I got off that train at Cassel at six o'clock in the morning – I'd been the only person on it – it was like the scene in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid when they get off the train in Bolivia. It was deserted apart from a little dog wandering up the line and a bus – like a charabanc – beside the level crossing at the end of the platform.

"So I went over and there was this big fat French geezer reading a paper. I said 'pardon monsieur, ou est le motocross?' – I was taught French at grammar school by a Scottish lady called Miss Macgregor so my French was pretty grim – and he flung his paper down, fired up his charabanc and we went barging off up this long, sinuous climb until we were suddenly in this narrow street with high, ancient buildings on each side.

"He shuddered to a halt at the beginning of the main street so I paid him – it was something like one Franc – and walked down and suddenly this amphitheatre opened up before me with bunting being put up by enthusiasts and there was this fabulous motocross circuit right behind the village.

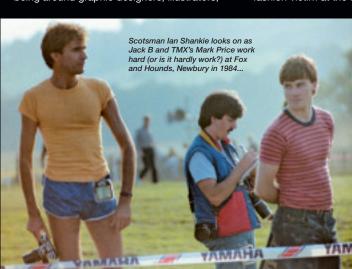
"There were three vehicles down in the paddock – Harvey's, Andy Ainsworth's and Pete Mathia's vans. It was steaming hot so I put my sleeping bag down and lay on top of it and slept for a couple of hours.

"It was one of the most amazing weekends of my life – 30,000 people in this kind of dust bowl. I remember thinking 'wow, this is continental motocross, this is really special!'.

"Incidentally, that Sunday night was the first time I ever met Pernod. They had this big celebration thing in the town hall that backed onto the track and there were trestle tables full of this strange cloudy fluid so I was arseholed by the time we left!

"Roger had a van full of people so I travelled back with Pete Math. It was the climax to a wonderful weekend.

"I had something like three photographs and a small story published in Motorcycle News but no byline which really upset me. Even today I always want to see bylines and know who's taken photographs."





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ooking across last season's top two SW85cc championships – that's the BYN and MX Nationals – Ike racked up an incredible 41 race wins from 51 starts. Adding the two series together he was the best youth performer and he also topped the box with victory at Master Kids UK.

His racing career started after his seventh birthday and with his distinctive Mohican lid it was always easy to spot lke as he battled his way through the Auto ranks.

His crowning moment in the 50cc division should have come at the 2011 ACU finals at Milton Park but a topsy turvy third race following an opening lap pile-up and then a puncture in his final outing ultimately meant podium third – that was after winning the opening two races.

Coming back to the front in the 2013 season, Ike was king in the GT Cup 65s. With five rounds down and fending off the likes of Eddie Jay Wade and Louie Kessell, he had the series virtually sewn-up until injury ended a glorious campaign. Suffering a broken femur also messed up a top-five championship finish in that year's Red Bull series.

With injury affecting his plans in 2014, a blank year in national terms followed. Then, after a hook-up with MBO Power, lke was back on the national circuit in 2015.

Riding with a busted finger in the opening rounds meant it took time to hit top form. A seventh place series finish in that year's British Youth Nationals and a champion's gold in the Route 77 series after turning over Sam Nunn at the final round was a more than

solid first year return.

Year two under MBO in 2016 was glory all the way and Rage fully expected lke would be a strong contender for the BW85cc championships this year. Then, just before Christmas, he shocked us all with a switch to a 125.

Rage: First of all lke, massive congratulations for all your national success last season. You've just had your 14th birthday – you obviously feel a move up to 125 is a better way to go this year rather than racing a BW85...

IC: "After the championship season finished last year I jumped on a big-wheel straight away, spent three months on it and I was ripping. I was really looking forward to going after BW titles but I've grown so









much in the last six months and I'm still growing.

"The way it's going I'd be way too tall and uncomfortable on the BW machine. I'm still only seven-and-a-half stone though so pretty light for a 125. With the rule change allowing 13-year-olds to move up it seemed like the right thing to do before Christmas and it definitely was – I'm loving the 125."

Rage: How about schooling and training – how do you fit all that in? And how have results gone so far this year?

IC: "I rarely have any time off school for MX – maybe the odd Friday if we have

a real long journey to fit in – and I don't really have any pro trainers I work with. All my bike time tends to be at weekends.

"This year got off to a rubbish start when we had a bike stolen from the back of our van. We sorted a new bike and results have been good so far – twice third overall in the Pro Green winter series at Chatteris in the Seniors and fifth overall in the Rookies and third-placed 125 in the Judd warm-up meeting at Sherwood. I need to get my starts nailed better.

"Can I also say to my family and all my sponsors – especially MBO – that I really appreciate everything you do for me, massive thanks."









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# NATIONAL EXPRESS!

A QUICKFIRE ROUND-UP OF ALL THAT'S GONE DOWN ON THE NATIONAL SCENE...

with the national season in March just about to hit full throttle it'll be interesting to see how the early movers and shakers of February perform as the season gets going.

Kicking off at the Hawkstone International, the 125cc pilots gave it real big licks up against the four-bangers in MXY2 – 125s giving as good as they get, is this the shape of things to come in 2017?

Topping their respective podiums at Hawkstone, Adam Collings and Tom Grimshaw walked off with the biggest round of applause. Getting his season off to a flier, Collings was best in qualification and then ran a superb 1-1-6 to take the overall win. Going 5-2-1, Grimshaw claimed the top 250F prize with four-stroke runner-up Howard Wainwright carding a solid 2-4-3.

Completing the podiums, Charlie Cole was runner-up in the smoker class with Josh Peters taking third. In the four-stroke section third went to Joe Cadwallader with his best result a second place finish in heat two.

A promising debut from Team Green's main man Lewis Hall culminated with a second place in

his final race for fourth overall.

Over to AX now where Ashton Boughen went 3-1 in Sheffield – it would have been 1-1 if he hadn't crashed while leading – to win the 65cc title with one round to go. At the Wembley Arena finale it was all about celebrating for AB and another brilliant show brought another series 1-1 and that made it a clean sweep of overall victories.

Team Green's Ben Mustoe ran 2-5 in London to claim the series runner-up award after a 2-2 in Sheffield where he finished equal top with Boughen. Northern Ireland talent Charley Irwin was the winner of the Sheffield opener and ultimately made series third as seven-year-old Freddie Bartlett put on a rousing Wembley show. Saving his best until last, a 3-2 card secured second overall on the night for series fourth.

In the SuperMinis it was Bobby Bruce who was top in Sheffield with a 2-1 score – his first race and overall win of the series – as Ben Clayton kept his series points advantage with a 1-2. Podium third went to Carl Osterman.

There's nothing quite like winning it in style and with Clayton taking both wins in London he

certainly did that all right. His series statistics read 11 race wins from 14 starts and six out of seven overall victories.

In his first AX series, Team Green Kawasaki's Bruce was more than happy with series silver as, also in his rookie indoor series, Louie Kessell grabbed series third.

At Sherwood the best combined youth paddock of the season so far gathered for the Judd Racing LSMX British Premier Cup warm-up meeting.

Picking out some highlights, Zane Stephens and Franky Jubb topped their respective Auto sections as Mackenzie Marshall beat Billy Moriarty in the 65s. Bailey Johnston was a clear winner in the SW85s and TM talent Jack Grayshon won all five races in the biggies with Billy Carter taking second overall.

In a fast and furious Rookies, Lewis Hall with four race wins dominated after fending off a superb 125cc challenge from Declan Hunter and Drew Anderson who ended up second and third overall. Hunter was the best of the 125s and claimed the other heat win and Sam Price made fourth overall from class newcomer lke Carter.







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CHAMPIONS HAVE BEEN CROWNED AND THE ARENAS ARE NOW EMPTY BUT THE 2017 AX TOUR LIVES ON INSIDE THE HEARTS OF THE 40,000 PEOPLE WHO WITNESSED IT...

unning over six weekends through the depths of winter, the 2017 Arenacross Tour kickstarted the British motocross season in fine style with huge crowds in sold-out arenas enjoying three hour shows packed full with high-octane awesomeness. As an overall spectacle it's outstanding but the AX series is also a legitimate sporting event that seems to be building in stature each and every year.

After the first five rounds – we reported on

After the first five rounds – we reported on those in last month's DBR – it was Team RFX St Blazey Suzuki's Cedric Soubeyras who had taken a slender lead in the championship chase headed into the final stretch. And with the red plate boosting his confidence the Frenchman stomped his authority all over round six in Sheffield as he trounced the competition in the Hot Lap and then dominated the 14-lap Main Event. This gave Soubs a comfortable eight-point lead over team-mate Angelo Pellegrini who himself moved one point ahead of the defending champ – SR75 World Team Suzuki's Thomas Ramette.

With double points on the line in Wembley

the outcome was far from settled though and mathematically no fewer than nine riders could still win the title although realistically that figure was down to five – Soubeyras, Pellegrini and Ramette plus battling Brits Adam Chatfield and Jack Brunell. Okay, it'd have taken a minor miracle for either home boy to pull it off but anyone who saw last year's final round would know that anything could happen.

The Hot Lap offered the first opportunity for those still in contention to pick up championship points and after taking a digger in his second heat it was Ramette who ran first of the favourites. Unfortunately for Thomas though he couldn't better first the time of the rider on the track – Adrien Escoffier – and it looked as though the RFX St Blazey boys would be extending their advantage. But that wasn't the case.

Rider after rider failed to beat the leading pair and by the time Brunell, Florent Soubs, Pellegrini and Collin Jurin had taken their turn it was still Escoffier and Ramette who ran 1-2 with only Ramette's team-mate Cyrille Coulon left to go. Surely, the SR75 World Team rider would throw his opportunity>>



















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and gift his team-mate a safe four points in the championship chase but that proved to not be the case and Coulon held it wide open, nailed a killer lap and topped the charts.

With just two bonus points in the bag Ramette was now seven behind Soubeyras and had moved one ahead of Pellegrini. Surely the title would fall to one of these three.

As the gate dropped for the Main Event it was Coulon who rocketed into an early ahead of Ramette, Jurin, Brunell, Richier and the RFX boys. At the end of lap one Richier put Brunell down at the end of the rhythm section and as the dust cleared it emerged that Soubeyras was on the deck too. What most people in the arena had missed was the fact that it was Pellegrini who'd put him there as the two team-mate's lines came together heading into the corner.

As the race settled in it was Coulon and Ramette who led the pack ahead of WD40 XBladez Husqvarna's Jurin. Meanwhile the fastest man on the track was Escoffier who'd come from right at the back of the pack - after not being able to jump the finish line double on lap one – to threaten the leading three in a matter of just two laps.

For the next five laps or so the front four ran line astern with Escoffier finally passing Jurin at the halfway point before immediately putting pressure on Ramette and moving up into second. Later that same lap Coulon hit the deck gifting the lead to the Husky ace and elevating his team-mate back to second. With a charging Soubeyras still only eighth it was Ramette who would be crowned champion as things stood but there were still several laps left to run.

With Escoffier looking rock steady and Jurin not quite able to close in on Ramette all eyes were on Soubs as he battled forward. Keystone Honda's Alex Snow proved easy prey but Brunell wasn't about to give up sixth without a fight.

On the penultimate lap the pair traded places back and forth but then the Brit locked up coming out of the only right-hand corner - as they approached the one-lap to go board - and Soubs had nowhere to go and hit him from behind. The pair hit the deck the battle was over and the war was won.

Less than 20 seconds later, Escoffier would take his second win of the year and just after that Ramette would cross the line to secure his third Arenacross title in as many attempts.



### RIDER OF THE YEAR CYRILLE COULON

The bearded veteran of four previous Arenacross tours brought a whole new intensity to his fifth and up until injuring his knee at round four in Belfast looked like

injuring his knee at round four in Belfast looked like a shoo-in to grab series gold as all those around him struggled with consistency. Still sore in Sheffield, Cyrille crashed out of the Main Event but bounced back in London at his absolute brilliant best.

Fastest in the Hot Lap – taking points from his team-mate who was still in arrears in the championship hunt at that point – the 34-year-old jumped out into an early lead in the Main Event and ran away with it until washing out his front wheel on the slick surface.

Realistically Cyrille should have won four Main Events in 2017 but as it turned out he only actually won two and was

2017 but as it turned out he only actually won two and was fastest in the Hot Lap part of the night twice n'all.

Maybe not the luckiest rider out there but certainly the



# Track of the yea

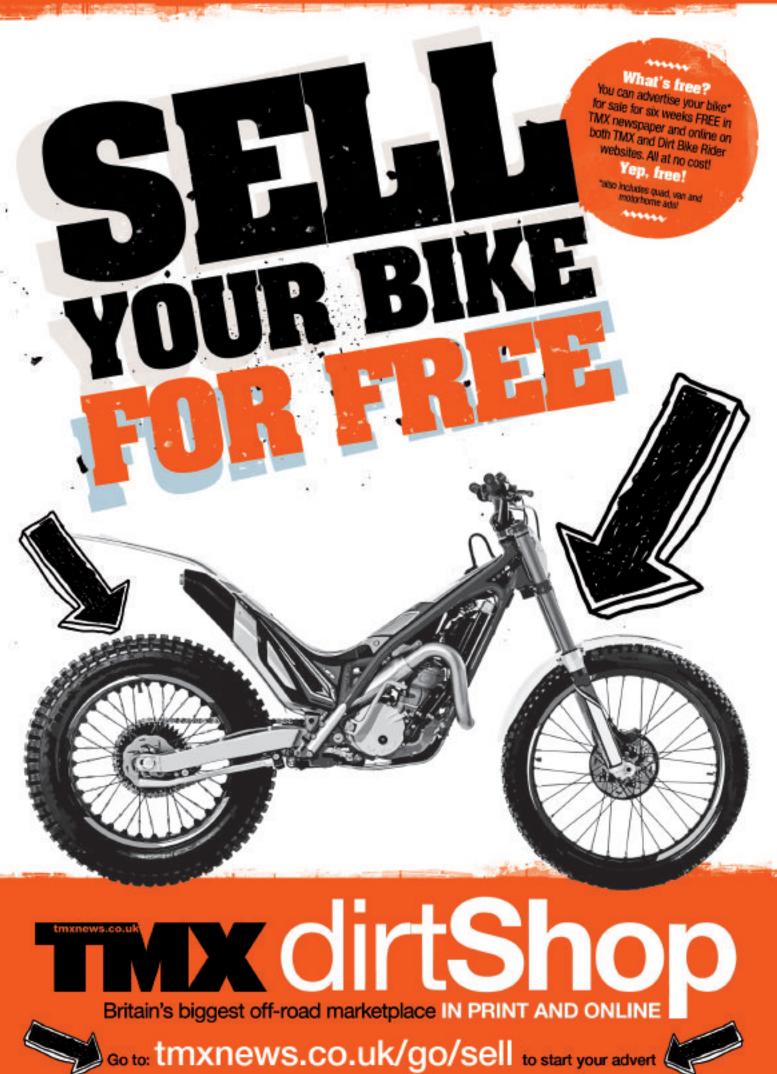
### BIRMINGHAM'S GENTING ARENA

Although both Manchester and Sheffield's soil was arguably much better, the layout inside the Genting Arena proved to be the most conducive to producing great racing mostly thanks to a killer rhythm section that separated the men from the boys and one superhero from the men.

SR75 Suzuki's Cyrille Coulon killed it through this section and when he got through it clean made beaucoup time up on the opposition. The slippery surface helped enhance the action in other ways too as the AX elite battled for grip in the turns - especially the long right-hander where the start was - which meant clever line selection and throttle control was key to success.

Picking a favourite from this year's tracks was definitely difficult as there wasn't a bad 'un in the bunch. If we really had to choose one we'd have to say Belfast's soft dirt kinda killed it but the racing and atmosphere inside the arena formerly known as the Odyssey more than made up for it.





The MVR-D Husqvarna star entered the season on a high after strong rides in the French SX Tour and at Lille but on the whole was just off the pace of the tour's perennial big hitters - Ramette, Soubeyras, Coulon and Pellegrini. However, through the course of the 2017 AX Tour the 22-year-old Frenchman stepped it up and became more than a match for the fab four. Teamed up with the right squad again in 2018 - let's hope the MVR-D boys keep him in their line-up - Escoffier has to be considered a title candidate should he return.





Seriously, who else saw this one coming? To be fair it's a bit of a no-brainer really and I can't believe that nobody else thought of it any sooner but the steel start pad really is a stroke of genius as it's clean, fair and quick to prepare – awesome!



# **ROUND OF THE YEAR**

THE WEMBLEY SHOOTOUT With two tighter than tight Pro Lites scraps serving as an appetiser ahead of a double-points Pro Class Main – that basically decided the outcome of the series

- the London crowd certainly got their money's worth of tasty on-track action. Heck, not even the £20 parking bill could sour this sweet serving. Superb!







ARENA OF THE YEAR

SSE HYDRO GLASGOW

Oh-so pretty on the outside, nice and comfortable on the inside and with reasonably priced-parking, the SSE Hydro easily picks up the title of Arena of the Year. That said, it's nigh on in impossible to understand what the staff there are saying - 'dae ye ken?' - but regardless of that I'm sure they mean well.

Boughen were all crowned AX Champions in 2017 but

fight! Just kiddin'... Since Ramette never even won a race (pffft!) and on past

experience alone Irsutt should have aced the Pro Lites class in his sleep we need to look at the younger guns to find ourselves a winner for this category.

So it boils down to a Ben 'Beans' Clayton versus Ashton Boughen scrap which is bizarre as 12 months ago it was their elder brothers who were in the mix for this very same title. While it was Joe Clayton who was crowned Champion of Champions in 2016, this year it's Master Boughen who gets the nod for the exact same reason that Joe did back then – outright class supremacy!

Eventually winning 12 out of 14 races, Ashton tied up the 65cc championship a round early and got to rock the #1 plate at the Wembley season finale. Ace work Ashton!















# **FMX RIDER(S) OF THE YEAR**

PARKER, ŠTEVE SOMMERFELD AND THE BOLDDOG LOT...

All of the freestyle riders on the AX Tour are total badasses but there's one of them who really puts the style in freestyle – that's Petr Pilat. Perhaps helped out by his long body, Petr seems to get maximum extension on every trick he pulls and then holds it too unlike Edgar Torronteras whose love for combos can make everything looked rushed and sloppy by comparison. I guess it's unfair to pick just one winner as they all bring something oh-so special to the party so let's go for multiple victors – yay! Oh, and don't worry Edgar – you're still the #1 burgar heatbox artist on the Tour







# TOP TEN RESULTS

ROUND 1	ROUND 2	ROUND 3	ROUND 4	ROUND 5	ROUND 6	ROUND 7
Pellegrini 23	Coulon 33	Coulon 55	Chatfield 64	Soubeyras 81	Soubeyras 104	Ramette 131
Richier 18	Pellegrini 31	Pellegrini 46	Coulon 63	Pellegrini 77	Pellegrini 96	Pellegrini 126
Chatfield 16	Escoffier 31	Richier 46	Soubeyras 63	Ramette 77	Ramette 95	Soubeyras 124
Escoffier 15	Soubeyras 30	Chatfield 44	Pellegrini 62	Chatfield 75	Chatfield 88	Chatfield 116
Brunell 14	Chatfield 30	Brunell 43	Richier 60	Brunell 72	Brunell 87	Escoffier 113
Soubeyras 13	Ramette 29	Soubeyras 42	Ramette 59	Richier 69	Coulon 72	Brunell 109
Bayliss 13	Brunell 27	Ramette 41	Brunell 56	Coulon 63	Escoffier 69	Coulon 94
Basaula 12	Richier 27	Escoffier 41	Basaula 41	Escoffier 61	Richier 69	Basaula 89
Ramette 10	Bayliss 25	Basaula 30	Escoffier 41	Basaula 53	Basaula 65	Richier 54
Coulon 10	Basaula 22	Bayliss 25	Bayliss 35	Bayliss 44	Bayliss 54	Bayliss 54



# AND THE

So we already know that Thomas Ramette is the 2015, '16 and now '17 AX Tour champion but what if there was no Hot Lap? There were no double points? There weren't double points or a Hot Lap? What if there were no promoter's choice spaces in the Main? Would he still be champion then? Read on and find out...

If you tuned in last month you'll have seen that we had a little fun with some fantasy series standings starting by totting up the Hot Lap points and then removing them from the - then current -series standings.

With only two rounds run the Hot Lap championship hasn't actually heated up all that much with the top four staying the same even with a helping of double points dished out in London. Bah. Cedric Soubeyras is still the King of the Hot Lap and wins this unofficial championship on 15 points ahead of Coulon and Ramette who both close the gap thanks to the bonus, bonus points they picked up in Capital City.

Moving on to the AX Championship without Hot Lap points and they almost mirror the official standings as only Soubs slips down the order. Ramette's still the boss ahead of Pellegrini while Chatfield (who didn't pick up any Hot Lap bonus points all year) is third.





Escoffier - who scraped in to the Glasgow Main as promoter's choice and failed to qualify on night one on Belfast all together - leaps to fourth in this one and actually edges Soubeyras in a tie-breaker on the most wins rule by two to one. Brunell meanwhile is sixth in this to go with his sixth in Hot Lap points and sixth in the actual final series standings. Consistent, huh?

Soubeyras takes his second unofficial title (to go with his zero official AX titles - what, too soon?) in the 'AX Championship without double points' which is basically how the championship would have panned out if London hadn't been worth double points. In this one Soubs edges Ramette with a single digit advantage while his RFX team-mate ranks third just three points in arrears.

It's Angelo's turn to pick up gold in the 'AX Championship without double points or Hot Lap'. The Italian Stallion actually tied on points with Ramette in this one but won it on the more wins tie-breaker rule. Chatfield picks up bronze while Soubs, Brunell and Escoffier are best of the rest.

And finally, in the 'AX Championship without the promoter's choice' we find that Ramette is still champion despite the fact that he's the only rider on the tour never to have been bettered by whichever bloke Matt Bates wanted to see in the final on that particular night. While Soubeyras gets even with Pellegrini thanks to the extra points he gets awarded the big loser in this category is Adam Chatfield who has to jettison 28 from London and falls way down the rankings even though he earns a handful back...

HOT LAP	
1 Soubeyras	15
2 Coulon	11
3 Ramette	8
4 Pellegrini	5
5 Escoffier	4
6 Brunell	વ

### AX CHAMPIONSHIP WITHOUT HOT LAP

1 Ramette	123
2 Pellegrini	121
3 Chatfield	116
4 Escoffier	109
5 Soubeyras	109
6 Brunell	106

# AX CHAMPIONSHIP WITHOUT DOUBLE

1 Soubeyras	114
2 Ramette	113
3 Pellegrini	111
4 Chatfield	102
5 Brunell	98
6 Escoffier	91

### AX CHAMPIONSHIP IOUT DOUBLE AND

1 Pellegrini	106
	(wins title on most wins tie-breaker)
2 Ramette	106
3 Chatfield	102
4 Soubeyras	99
5 Brunell	95
6 Escoffier	89

### AX CHAMPIONSHIP WITHOUT THE PROMOTER'S CHOICE

1 Ramette	131
2 Soubeyras	127
(takes second on most third place	ces tie-breaker)
3 Pellegrini	127
4 Brunell	112
5 Coulon	100
6 Escoffier	98

\* all championship tables for Sutty's entertainment purpoonly and should be ignored by anyone with an actual life.



### PAY CHEQUES OF THE FILTHY AND FAMOUS...

With pride, points and a rather mahoosive prize fund up for grabs it's no wonder that the AX elite race so hard on a Saturday night. With each Main Event paying out over 10 grand to its combatants we wondered just how much the leading riders made over the (some racers also receive start money as well as championship and event bonuses from their teams and sponsors but that information is a closely guarded secret) and figured we'd share the info with you.

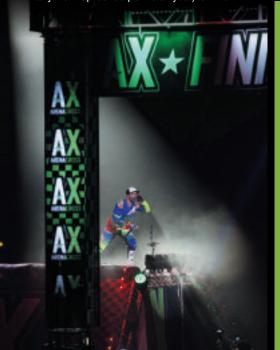
The results make for fairly interesting reading as the amount paid out doesn't reflect championship positions with

reflect championship positions with

Soubeyras earning an extra £125 than his team-mate Pellegrini despite scoring two points less over the course of the season. Adrien Escoffier is the tour's next highest paid athlete despite missing out on a payday in Belfast when he failed to make it into the money. His Tour pay cheque is bolstered by

The rider with the most bulging mattress after the series was done and dusted was Tour champion Thomas Ramette which shouldn't be too surprising except for the fact that he failed to win a Main Event all year – or a Hot Lap which also pays out to the fastest four. Consistency is king when it comes to Arenacross it seems and Thomas' title and Tour earnings are testament to that.

	UUR'S	IUP EARNERS
	Ramette	£11,150
	Soubeyras	£9,850
	Pellegrini	£9,775
	Escoffier	£8,525
5	Chatfield	£7,400
6	Brunell	£6,200





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Photo: David Chisholm

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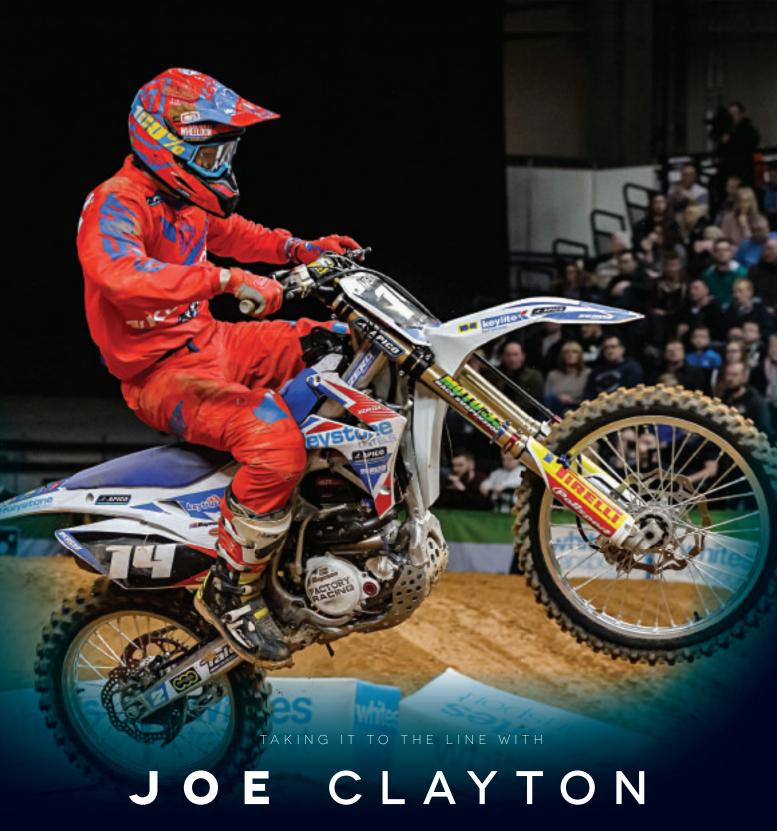




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